WORDEATER 36

WORDEATER XXXVI STAFF

Judy Belfield — Kristi Karsten
J. D. Guse — Ernest McCabe
Mark Hulfactor — David Moore
John Stobart

To get a submission printed in this issue, four of the above had to vote for acceptance. Cash prizes are frequently awarded to outstanding contr butors to an issue. There were many high-quality submissions for this issue, but unfortunately, our funds ran out. For that reason, there are no literary awards for WORDEATER XXXVI.

$20.00 FOR COVER DESIGNS GOES TO MARGE PETERSON

Manuscripts or cover designs for WORDEATER 37 must be submitted to John Stobart in room C 1069 by October 5. Manuscripts will not be returned. They may be anonymous and should be typed.

NOTE: Several other pieces, which do not appear here, were accepted by the staff for this issue. Our space ran out, and they will be printed in WORDEATER 37, the next issue. Look for works by Jan Allen, J. Aschenbrenner, J. D. Guse, Geri Harder, Charles Hinton, David Moore, Sharon Odeh al, Marge Peterson, Adriane Saylor, and Simon.

Other deadlines this year include:

WORDEATER 38 - November 23, 1981
39 - February 26, 1982
40 - April 30, 1982

Thanks to all who helped collate.

****

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Simon	CONNECT THE DOTS	1
Diane Francis	CREATIVE TYPING	1
J. D. Guse	reservations on punk	2
Simon	MR. RAISINHEAD	2
David Moore	METAMORPHIC ULTRAFROGS	3
" "	TWISTED CREATIVITY	3
Geri Harder	INSPIRATION	3
Diane Francis	FUN WITH HOMONYMS	4
Jan Allen	ROUND	4
David Moore	FEATURING THE FIRES (AND OTHER WORDS)	5
" "	POETIC LICENSE	5
Diane Francis	BITTER REPLY	5
J. D. Guse	WISHFUL THINKING IN THE JUCO CAFE #1	6
" "	WISHFUL THINKING IN THE JUCO CAFE #2	6
Judy Belfield	PARTY ART	6
David Moore	ALL IN THE MIND	6
Judy Belfield	SOAP BUBBLES AND EXISTENCE	8
Marge Peterson	ECHOES	9
Geri Harder	GOOD-BYES	9
David Moore	WANDERLUST	9
Judy Belfield	THE PLASTIC BEAD FANTASY	9
" "	EYES ALONE	10
" "	CHARADE	10
David Moore	HARD-CORE FATALISM	10
" "	I AM THE VOID	11
Adriane Saylor	THE GHOSTS IN MY LIVING ROOM	11
David Moore	RISE AND FALL	12
Judy Belfield	DEATHGAMES	12
" "	ALL I WANT RIGHT NOW	13
Simon	SWIMMING, SLIDING, GRAY (MATTER?)	13

(continued)

TABLE OF CONTENTS, continued

Geri Harder	GIVE ME OLD CLOTHES ANYDAY	14
Judy Belfield	LOSING FRIENDS	14
Jan Allen	WEED	14
Judy Belfield	CHANGES AHEAD	15
Geri Harder	FOR DOGS AND DREAMERS	15
M. J. Crestman	MONDAY WAS A CHECKER GAME UNFINISHED	16
Geri Harder	FIRST BLOOD	18
" "	FIRST TIME	18
Judy Belfield	1969 OLD TOWN 1981	19
Adriane Saylor	THE LAST RIDE	19
J. D. Guse	POEM TO PAT	21
Geri Harder	DEFENSE AGAINST A NOSY NEIGHBOR	22
Sharon Odehnal	PATRICIA	23
" "	DO YOU?	23
Jan Allen	WORDEATER -- A CHILD'S VIEW	23
J. D. Guse	IF THE DOG	23
Simon	RUDE INTERVENTION	23
" "	I WANT TO BE A MONK	24
Judy Belfield	I USED TO BE CRAZY	24
David Moore	AN UNEXPECTED AFTERLIFE	24
Jan Allen	HELL	27
Judy Belfield	WHEN THERE WAS GOD, OR, PROLOGUE FOR AN UNWRITTEN NOVEL.	27
David Moore	MAZE OF CONFUSION	28
" "	IT NEVER ENDS	28
Simon	RANDOM GENERATION	28
Judy Belfield	THE DAY AFTER THE BOMB	29
Sharon Odehnal	THE ROAD'S END	29
David Moore	AMBERCROM AND BEYOND	30
" "	AZAMANTA SWIMS GRACEFULLY	34
J. D. Guse	SACRILIGIOUS COMPLIMENT TO A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN	34
Adriane Saylor	TOMORROW IS TIME ENOUGH	35
" "	DAY RETROGRADE, OR MOON, VOID OF COURSE	35
Judy Belfield	WHEN I CALLED TODAY	35
J. Aschenbrenner	MOMENTS	35
Mary Hensley	SUNDAY DRIVE	36
Judy Belfield	BECAUSE YOUR KISSES WERE SO WARM	36
Geri Harder	HOW DID YOU KNOW?	36
" "	FOR DAVE	37
" "	FACING IT AGAIN	37
" "	THIS TIME	37
Judy Belfield	I SIT . . . PEN IN HAND	37
" "	LET US RUN AWAY	37
Geri Harder	A FANTASY	38
J. Aschenbrenner	LOVE ON THE ROCKS	38
Simon	"13" AND NOTHING BETTER TO DO	38
Mary Hensley	ACE IS THE PLACE	38
Jan Allen	A LINEAR PROGRESSION	41
Douglas W. Billett	A SONG	41
J. D. Guse	NEW WORDS TO AN OLD TUNE	41
David Moore	THE SHADOW OF THE LAU	42
Douglas W. Billett	MY HANDS	42
Diane Francis	TO THE BLOODGUILTY ONE	42
Adriane Saylor	LOVE MONEY	43
Judy Belfield	LIKE A THIEF	43
Simon	THE JUMAN FETUS IS LIKE A PARASITIC TAPEWORM THAT NEEDS TO BE PUNISHED	43
Simon	DON'T FACE THE NATION (NON-SENSE)	44
Judy Belfield	EVEN AS THE SUN SHINES	44
Simon	SIGHTING A NAVY AD	45
J. Aschenbrenner	PAIN SO DEEP	45
Adriane Saylor	SOME STUFF ON A THURSDAY	45
Marge Peterson	TOAD TEA	46

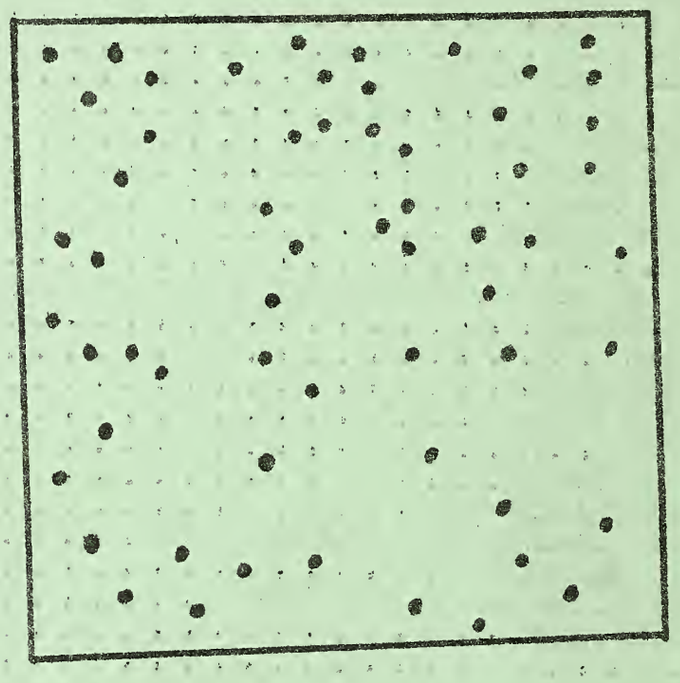
****

Simon

CONNECT THE DOTS

I remember a very creative game that I learned when I was younger. I am not sure who invented it. It is called CONNECT THE DOTS.

Below you will find a list of numbers. Take each number and attach it to a dot in the box (also below). Then draw a line joining dot number 1 with dot number 2. Continue with a line to 3, 4, 5, and so on, until you have finished. Have fun.



NUMBER LIST

1	16	31	46
2	17	32	47
3	18	33	48
4	19	34	49
5	20	35	50
6	21	36	51
7	22	37	52
8	23	38	53
9	24	39	54
10	25	40	55
11	26	41	56
12	27	42	57
13	28	43	58
14	29	44	59
15	30	45	60

****

Diane Francis

CREATIVE TYPING

GOLD glistens gaily in the streams of my brain.

DIAMONDS dazzle delicately in the mines of my eyes

LOVE leaps lively in the heavens of my heart.

WIND whistles wonderfully in the caverns of my ears.

RAINBOWS radiate reverently in the skies of my soul.

****

J. D. Guse

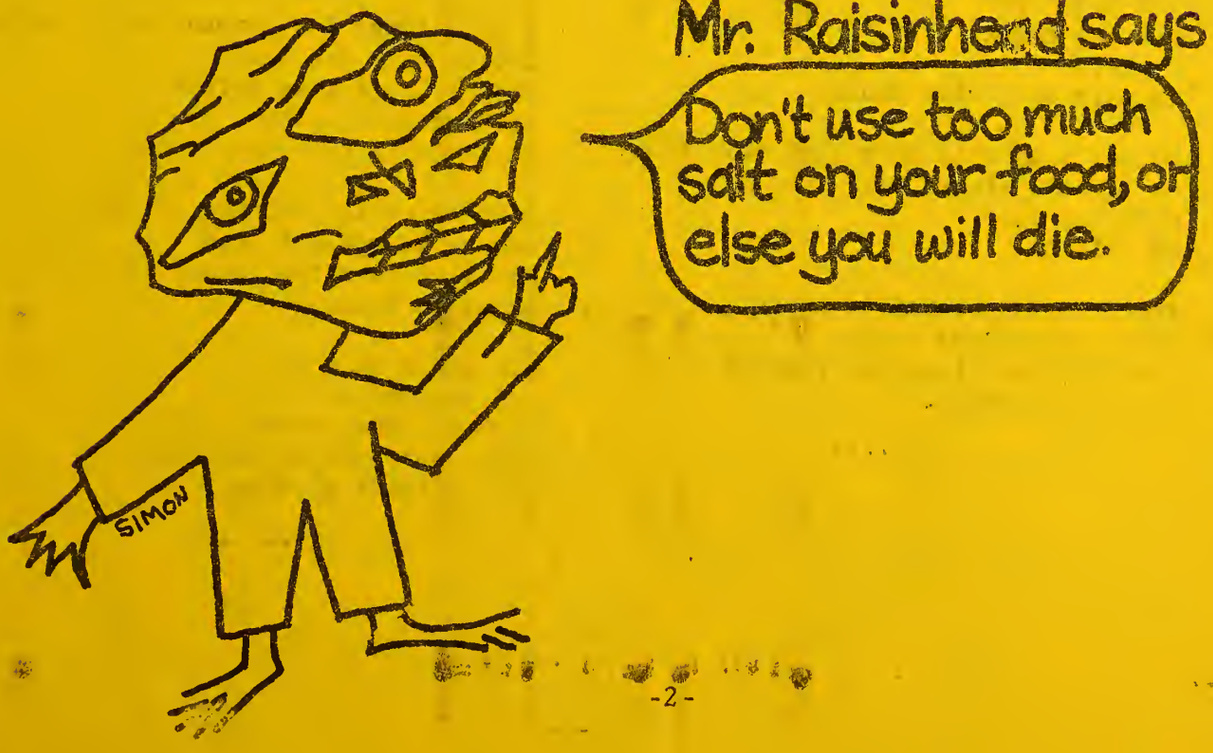
reservations on punk

aMONG ALL THE IN THINGS TO BE DOING NOWADAYS ONE OF THE MORE INTERESTING FADS IS WRITING mIND YOU i'M NOT SPEAKING OF JUST ANY WRITING i'M SPEAKING OF PUNK WRITING tHE IDEA WAS STRUCK ON JUST RECENTLY BY AN OLD MUTE iNDIAN WRITER NAMED crazy hoarse iN HIS BOOK very few rules for writing crazy hoarse DESCRIBES WHAT IT TAKES TO WRITE PUNK nOTHING tHE WHOLE POINT BEHIND WRITING PUNK IS TO NOT WRITE BY THE RULES tHAT MEANS NO PARAGRAPHS NO PUNCTUATION NOTHING oF COURSE THERE ARE SOME DIFFICULTIES WITH WRITING AND SELLING punk literature the craze AS HE IS SOMETIMES REFERRED TO BY FOLLOWERS STATES tHERE's JUST NOT ENOUGH DEMAND FOR PUNK LIT ERATURE RIGHT NOW bUT WHEN ASKED WHETHER the craze THOUGHT HE WAS STEALING THE PUNK IDEA FROM THE MUSIC WORLD the craze REPLIED tHIS BOOK IS IN ITS TWELFTH PRINTING ON THE RESERVATION wELL THEN i ASKED wHERE DID YOU COME UP WITH THE IDEA OF PUNK LITERA TURE i USED TO READ THE DICTIONARY AND i FOUND THAT NO WORD WAS CAPITALIZED EXCEPT THE NAMES OF PEOPLE SO i USE ALL CAPITAL LETTERS EXCEPT THE WORD i WHICH i USE A SMALL LETTER FOR wHAT ABOUT PUNCTUATION i ASKED wELL i TRY NOT TO USE ANY crazy hoars REPLIED sO IT SEEMS PUNK LITERATURE IS MAKING A STAND ON THE RESERVATION bUT the craze IS QUICK TO ADD a LOT OF PEOPLE WRITE IN SOME KIND OF PUNK STYLE LITERATURE UNINTENTIONALLY the craze LATER EXPLAINED THAT MISSPELLING WORDS ON PURPOSE IS A COMMON PRACTICE tHE WRITER SOMETIMES THROWS IN A MISSPELLED WORD TO WAKE THE READER sTUDENTS ARE ALSO GOOD AT LEAVING OUT PUNCTUATION mISSED PUNCTUATION IS REALLY A HARD WAY FOR THE WRITER TO GET THE READER TO WAKE UP UNLESS OF COURSE YOU LEAVE THE PUNCTUATION OFF THE END OF A SENTENCE sO mr hoarse i ASKED IN ALL THE YEARS OF WRITING IN THE PUNK STYLE WHAT KINDS OF PEOPLE ARE YOUR FOLLOWERS aLL KINDS iN FACT WE EVEN HAVE A SENATOR FROM south dakota WHO WRITES AND SPEAKS IN A PUNK STYLE oF COURSE NO ONE UNDERSTANDS HIM AND HE VERY SELDOM MAKES AN APPEARANCE AT HIS JOB bUT HE CAN OFTEN BE SEEN AT studio 54 SNORTING COCAINE WITH hamilton jordan sPEAKING OF DRUGS i QUESTIONED DO YOU EVER TAKE ANY DRUGS i NEVER TAKE DRUGS WHEN i'M NOT WRITING sO WITH EVERYTHING THAT CAN BE SAID FOR PUNK LITERATURE THE ONLY SURE THING TO SAY IS

Look at them Punk writers
ain't they queer
writing that punk crap
drinking their beer

Wanna be punk writers
here's all ya gotta do
don't make it rhyme

****



David Moore

METAMORPHIC ULTRAFROGS

It's a codfish crime/I feel fine/It's a codfish crime/I feel fine/It's a codfish crime/I feel fine/It's a godfish crime/I feel time/It's a dogshit grime/I feel nine/It's a godshit rhyme/ I feel mine/It's a good time/I eat line/It's a catfish chyme/ I see shine/It's a rathole climb/I feel spine/It's a hellhole lime/I am mine/It's a lordship con/I ain't free/It's a crapshoot run/I will find/It's a frogless jump/I won't see/It's a mournful hump/I feel fine?/It's a city dump/A real find/It's a lordful chump/I felt fine/It was a codfish crime/I felt/It was a codfish/I/It was/ /It was?/It/It/It/It/It/It/It/It/Fine
And now for role reversal . . .

My god has fleas
Our dog, who art in heaven

****

Geri Harder

INSPIRATION

I'm waiting for you, Inspiration.
Lying here, pen in hand,
Spread-eagle on the bed
Just in case you're a man.

The window's wide open
So drift right in, please
On the back of the breeze.
Or use the door
If that's more
Your style.
Take your time.
I've got a while.

Will I know you when you arrive?
Will you slap my hand, give me five?
Will I suddenly feel vibrantly alive?

Will I go on a nice, natural high?
Or will it be a bad trip,
Drug-induced?
What monstrosities in my subconscious mind
Will be temporarily loosed
Upon the earth?
Will the result
Be worth
The pain they will cause?

And how long will they last this time?
You haven't always been kind
In the past.
And I find

Myself having second thoughts
About your coming today.
I need my head together for now
So just stay away.

****

David Moore

TWISTED CREATIVITY

I've preserved my sanity
In formaldehyde
And placed it on the shelf
Right next to the ashes
Of my Uncle Ralph

They've put my soul
In a bowl
Of chocolate flavored phlegm
And placed it before the door
Of the dragon's den

I've gazed as oceans
Stained with blood
Smash the iron dams
And fill the silent lands below
With a roaring flood

I've watched the people in the streets
Eating rats for lunch
They'll hunt them softly
With stolen bricks
Then you'll hear the crunch

I've heard the writing on the wall
Scream in scarlet pain
And I've seen the echoes in the hall
Shout in falling rain

All these things
And many more
Lacking thought and form
Have gone past in darkness
Just outside my door

****

Diane Francis

FUN WITH HOMONYMS

Aye,
I stuck a needle in my
eye And ate
the eight ball.
For I was the one
who won the game.

Si, I
see the shining
sea.
Bea,
be a dear and swat that
bee.

Wear your
wares
where we can see them.
Two will be
too many
to find.
I'll buy
that by the time I go
bye-bye.

So I'll
sew those pants --
Did you rip them while digging ore
or
picking up the oar?

Meet us at the
meat market.
The main ingredient is the horse's
mane.
Can you hear the noises
here?
We're singing a hymn
for Him.
They'll be weak by the
end of the week.

Do you know if their
car is over there?
No, I don't
know.

I s'pose you dozed thru this poem.
That's OK. I did too.

****

Jan Allen

ROUND

Like the person wanting to lose 30 pounds,
I try to drop the dead weight of my psyche.
My mind is plump with normalcy,
Laboriously learned in stultifyingly sterile places.
dates, names, people, places
appointments and disappointments
Instead of a small candle of creative conception
To beam through my mundane thoughts,
I need a blowtorch.

****

David Moore

FEATURING THE FIRES (AND OTHER WORDS)

Warm ooze dripping
Onto an open fire
Jack the Ripper
In panty hose

Dead dogs stripping
Just for hire
Snip with clippers
An oversize nose

Numb hands gripping
As he climbs the spire
Look at Flipper
Eat a rose

Broken cups slipping
Into a stinking mire
Get a dipper
As fungus grows

(pick up the pace a little)

Sump pump
City dump
Sitting on a tree stump
Feeling like a mindless clump

Topsy turvy
Botulism
And scurvy
Are in no hurry
To make us worry

Homicide
Suicide
And herbicide too
All these things can happen to you

Dire fires
Burning higher
Praying to their
Explosive sires

Dire fires
Melting spires
Scorching deserts
And oozing mires

Dire fires
Like raging liars
Crackle softly
And never tire

Floating mountains
In the sky
When they fall
It's time to die

I'm sitting alone
Awaiting the phone
And feeling as though
I have no home

I'm writing down phrases
That make no sense
Trivial sayings
That seem so dense

****

Diane Francis

BITTER REPLY

Irrationalism derived -- ordinarily nuceolated.
Thaumaturges lurk in korners euphistically.
Fairyland reasoning -- eccentric effector.
Vanglorious ennui.
Rampageous scansion -- euphorical pilferage.
Outmaneuvered, excremtitious theorems.
Rafflesious, yammering syllables oppugnantly metered.
Eclaircissment tabescently infatuated.
Megacephallic edacious sadist inquires thoughtfully --
Demon's onslaught embraces subconscious niches.
Toxic medicament anesthetizes kyphotic effusion.
Abundant nonsense yearns sedation --
Entailing notable sarcastic effect.

Can you find the hidden message?
Hint: The answer has FIRST priority.

****

David Moore

POETIC LICENSE

Tortured poets cry out
To deaf ears
Hoping against hope that
A message will be heard
Above the resentment

Cha la la
Toward sacred Ura
The forbidden city
A beginning without end
Rules that cannot bend
Feelings that can't be spent
Messages that can't be sent

Fungus fungus on the ground
I'd love to kick you
All around

And as love decays
It's time to fade
A W A Y
Leaving nothing but scars

****

J. D. Guse

WISHFUL THINKING IN THE JUCO CAFE #1

I've wanted to write
so bad
for so long
that I've given way
to napkins
and the backs of deposit slips.

My pen is always ready
but I'm often without paper.
So I'm waiting for the day
when no paper is handy
and I must write all over my arms and
legs
or on a cigarette pack
or even
God forbid
on a bathroom wall.

****

WISHFUL THINKING IN THE JUCO CAFE #2

Through all these trying times
when I have so much to write
I just wish that I could draw.
I feel so much is said
by just one black curved line
or a face upon a canvas.

But I have chosen written words
instead of picture words.
Maybe cause the written word
explains more to me.
Or maybe cause the written word
expresses more to me.
Or maybe the whole reason is
I really just can't draw.

****

Judy Belfield

PARTY ART

A party of artists in feathers and finery
gathered up sequins and glitter and glee
and met in a loft at twenty past three
one Saturday night on a whim.
By three-thirty-two, all of them were quite smashed --
having been boozed and potted and hashed.
They twinkled and flashed and garishly clashed
under pink lightbulbs swinging from strings.
"Frippery -- shamefully fabulous!"
said Frederick Fletcher, fragile and frail,
indigo-lipped and powdered so pale
to sensuous, quivery Monica Male.
"Dahling, you're so gawdy and wonderful," she replied.
Many other words were stuttered and spouted,
expounding aesthetics -- the ins and the outed,
the latter of which was most scathingly flouted
at every little two or threesome come together.
The gala continued for a year and a day
(because a year and a day is the only way
poets define time-limits on such things)
and ended when the colors blurred --
pouring slowly from giant paint buckets overhead.

****

David Moore

ALL IN THE MIND

Carnivore Prowl
Yellow and Black
Running around
Picking up slack
Nothing can stop it
Nobody dares
But it's merely
An aimless wanderer
Causing terror
Unawares

Greetings readers. I hope you're enjoying this issue of the Wordeater. (continued) One pleasant spring day, I decided

But it looks like you've hit a stumbling block here -- one of my stories. You know, people tend to think my stories are bizarre and unreal. I beg to differ. What is a story other than a string of creative thoughts? And is not a thought as real as a tree? Do not thoughts exist? Wow, what deep questions.

Well, since I have this space allotted to me, I had best write a story . .

to make up a story. I figured it should be a monster story. The kind where a horrible alien monster intrudes upon normal day-to-day life and causes all sorts of trouble. In order to further amuse my readers, I thought it would be clever of me to have it take place in a setting they might be familiar with. I chose Jefferson Square.

Well, that was a good idea. Now I had to focus things a little. I figured it would be economical if the alien just trashed one store and not the whole mall. Besides, people are reaching the point where they aren't awed by widespread fictional destruction anymore.

So, one fine afternoon I found myself wandering around my would-be setting. I hiked back and forth from one end to another, peering into every shop, seeking the perfect place for my monster to attack. Anyone interested probably thought I was staking out the place.

I even saw a couple of people I know. But I pretended that I was unaware of them. This was business, not pleasure. After all, I could win 25 bucks for this. One of them was a girl from my biology class. She was standing openly in one of the stores I was investigating. I don't think she saw me, which was all right. Exchange of greetings would have disrupted my really creative train of thought. I wasn't so lucky with the other person. He was a kid I'd known in high school. Back then, he'd been a clean-cut, straight A student. That day, he needed a shave pretty bad. His clothes were worn out. He was wearing a baseball cap. And he was holding a can of pop. All in all, he seemed to have become more of a slob than me. He cheerfully warned me that some space creatures were out to get me as we passed each other. I thanked him for his warning -- up until then, I had been completely unaware that there were some space creatures out to get me.

I then went to my car and headed home.

It was time to begin writing. I decided that my monster would wreck one of those fancy clothing stores that cater to women. Don't get me wrong, I don't object to fancy clothing. But it is so obviously symbolic of all that is trivial and artificial in today's society. It seemed to me that this store would be run completely by females, but owned by a male. That also may be symbolic.

Now I needed characters. The first one would be an old man, sort of a bum, the kind of man who had lost more battles with life than he had won. I figured he should live in a trailer. I once spent some time traveling in a trailer with my aunt and uncle, so I know what it's like. My hero was also on welfare. Maybe at one time he'd worked for Caterpillar. I don't care that much. It doesn't matter.

The other character would be a young lady working in the clothing store. She probably goes to college, gets fairly good grades, has a steady boyfriend (her fifth or sixth?), a lot of other friends, and she has a lot of fun -- the kind of girl who wouldn't pay much attention to an eccentric young author like myself. But she's obviously unique in one way. She is beautiful. There is a difference. I won't bother to describe her. You readers can just use your own subjective standards of beauty. But I know what she looks like. Ah yes, every monster story needs a beautiful heroine, right?

On with the show.

I figure the old man -- I'll call him Edgar -- is sitting in his trailer watching a Cubs game on an almost antique black and white TV. It's a nice afternoon, but the night before it had rained. So, the ground around his trailer is pretty muddy. Of course he's fairly well isolated from any nearby help. That's only natural in this kind of story. But where does this scene exist in relationship to Jefferson Square? Sorry, but this setting is totally fictional.

Now for the monster. It is a huge, vaguely humanoid giant. It's slimy and covered with metallic green scales. Its head is a shapeless, blubbery blob. There are no ears, nostrils or mouth visible, but it possesses one large eye. Naturally, it comes from outer space. Where else?

Its flying saucer silently lands behind some trees not far from Edgar's trailer. The only hint my poor old man has that something's up, is some interference messing up his television before the saucer lands. He cusses and takes a gulp of beer. Unaware.

The horrible alien emerges from his vehicle (I'll say it's a he), looks around, spots the trailer, and begins stalking toward it. Nobody observes him as he sneaks alongside Edgar's home and peers through the window. He sees my protagonist and freaks out. Then he tears that trailer apart with his bare hands as if it were a box of Cracker Jacks.

Luckily, Edgar served in WWII. Because of this experience, he has some quick wits and reflexes. And since he's in fairly good shape, he runs for it. The monster, after shredding the trailer, takes off after him. They leave a distinct trail across the mud. Edgar is heading for the nearest place where there are lots of people who might help him -- Jefferson Square.

Let us now move ahead in time.

I think I'll put myself in this story just to satisfy my ego. I'm going to be sitting in Long John Silver's Seafood Shoppe across from the mall, casually munching on fish and chips. This way, I can be close to the action and laugh at my poor innocent characters if I feel like it. But I probably won't.

My heroine, I'm going to give her the unusual name of Alexandra, is at work. She's helping an old woman look for dresses that won't really enhance her appearance, but they will cost a lot of money.

(continued)

This old lady is the stereotype of the old battle-axe. You know, the kind you always see in cartoons hitting her meek and mild husband over the head with a rolling pin. The poor old dolt probably works all day at some boring, executive job just so the wife can buy fancy clothes. This is how free enterprise exploits vanity.

By the way, maybe I'll exercise a little vanity. In this tory, I think I'll drive to Long John Silver's in a Rolls Royce. Why not, it's my damn story. It won't even matter that much if the alien smashes the car up a little, I got a whole fleet of them back at the mansion.

Anyway, Alexandra is ringing up the old woman's purchases when she becomes aware of screaming out in the hallway. People are running past, consumed by a frenzy of fear. They're absorbed by it, totally mindless robots programmed by terror. The battle-axe rushes to join the stampede. "Just another buffalo," Alexandra comments wistfully.

That's right folks. I've decided that my heroine should have other virtues besides physical beauty. She has a sense of humor, courage, and some curiosity. Wondering just what the masses are running from, she prepares to step out into the hall of the mall.

But I'm going to cause he plan to be thwarted. Before she leaves the confines of her store, Edgar staggers in. Drained of energy, he falls to his knees in front of Alexandra. He gazes up at her with blind, desperate eyes. "Help me," he gasps, just before collapsing completely.

'Landra is a bit confused by all this. Something really bad must be coming down. She casually looks up, straight into the face of fear. The extraterrestrial cyclops looks down upon her, standing silently like a sentinel. Now, Alexandra is scared. But now she has reason to be.

Give her credit though, she doesn't scream or flip out. She just stares back, overawed. The monster easily hoists up the unconscious Edgar and examines him for a minute before letting him drop. Alexandra takes the opportunity to quickly leave by the back way.

The alien realizes she's vanished and flies into a rage. He literally wrecks the place. I know this is a cliche, but when he's finished, it looks like a tornado has struck. Then he leaves the shopping center entirely. I see him crossing the parking lot from my vantage point. I'm shocked. I didn't think my creature would be so hideous. Dope that I am, I accidently eat a french fry before dipping it in the ketchup.

Then the monster goes back to his landing sight and takes off for parts unknown. I'll be driving home in my Rolls when I see the saucer pass over the highway. I wonder if the story will make the Herald News, or at least, the Blazer. Sure, sure.

Aloha people.

****

Judy Belfield

SOAP BUBBLES AND EXISTENCE

A soap bubble in the wind
knows not which direction it will take
yet it exists --
if only for a short time --
and has no purpose
but to float from here to there
reflecting light in garish irridescence
and, settling on a blade of grass,
it rests awhile, moves on,
and, finally, bursts.

We exist,
thinking there is purpose
only because we are able to think,
and we remember
only because we are able to reflect,
but our thinking and reflections
are also garish hues
produced by an untimely accident
some choose to call god's plan
and others call the cycle of life,
yet we too rest awhile, move on,
and, finally, burst.
We question the meaning of existence,
and instead of just being,
we ask why --
which separates us from innocence
and, probably, contentedness.
Who is to say
there is not
superior intelligence in bubbles?

****

Marge Peterson

ECHOES

Words
Spoken earnestly
Hang in the air
Waiting for understanding
Waiting

Hear
Please listen
They are there
Wanting comprehension
Wanting

Echoes
Fade slowly
Silent rejection
Where are you
Where

****

Geri Harder

GOOD-BYES

Good-byes.
Like Band-Aids coming off,
So painful,
But the faster you do it
The less it hurts.
And sometimes the scars stay
Anyway.

****

David Moore

WANDERLUST

The door is locked
And I have no key
There's a reason for this
A reason you see
Because there's no place here
No place for me

I just don't belong
In any time
Or in any place
So I'll just be running now
Running along
Until I'm gone

I have a mind
And yet I was blind
All you could do
Was respond in kind

Help me
Emotional pain
Is such a strain
Help me
Nothing to gain
Under these clouds
Clouds without rain

Always running
Always afraid
Always alone
Always

****

Judy Belfield

THE PLASTIC BEAD FANTASY

Because I have people around
    who speak to me and expect answers,
    who make demands of my time and money,
    who touch me occasionally for whatever reason,
I think that I exist.
Were they all to disappear tomorrow,
    and I had no interaction
    but my own thoughts
    bouncing off the mirrors in my mind,
    would it be enough to convince me
    that I were not a figment of my own creation?
But how could I create
    were I a fantasy myself,
    I would ask --
    and then answer,
    creation is only a word --
        as meaningless as existence.
Am I a plastic bead
    that clacks against others in the wind
    as we hang on a precarious thread?
And do I only think I hear myself clacking?

****

Judy Belfield

EYES ALONE

Tonight no part of me exists
except my eyeballs,
which seem greatly exaggerated in size
because they pound from within
and scream their need for tears.
Oh, I could cry so easily now into a pillow
and I would wail and tear my hair
and feel as if a crashing hurricane had possessed me,
thrashing me from concrete walls to asphalt streets
until I were battered beyond recognition,
but even then --
exhausted --
I would not sleep,
for there is an agony in my soul
and I cannot find it to kill.
Tomorrow in the sunlight
my great green eyes
will find it difficult to see.
Swollen up and heavy-lidded,
again they will remind me
that they alone exist.

****

Judy Belfield

CHARADE

I spend too much time
trying to dull my senses in alcohol.
It doesn't kill the pain
or even black its eye --
there is only a several-hour delay,
during which time,
I think incoherently,
which tricks me into believing
I have no feelings.
I know this is a charade --
yet I tip the glasses to my lips in rapid succession,
impatiently awaiting stupor
to cloud my head in catatonic cotton,
hoping the next sip
will be the one
that kills.

****

David Moore

HARD-CORE FATALISM

Revelations playing games
ALONG THE CRYSTAL SHORES
Tearing down monuments
THAT PROUDLY REACH THE SKY
Teaching lessons that
REFOCUS MAGNITUDE
Toward the infinite
JUST FOR THE PLEASURE OF IT

So sing a shabby song
As you think about the past
As you volley your servitude
From player to player
In this game that cannot last
Yet has gone on forever
But don't you know that you've been
Caught in the amber of eternity
Spinning 'round and 'round a vortex
Flushed down into the void
Through the alleys of the
Nightly Necropolis
Where the prowlers stalk
But the trees don't walk

****

David Moore

I AM THE VOID

Darkness in the soul
A big emotional hole
As I wander the fringes
Like a scavenger
because
There are no more games
To be given names
No more aimless dances
Or messed up chances

I am the void
Your God
Masked by your personality
Created by your failure
Nurtured by your sorrow

Look at this life
Of psychic strife
Or hear the song
Of a lonely gong

It's all the same
A timeless thing
Can't be tame
and
It will be a long, hard climb
To the end of time
To the end
And around the bend

Will that sorrow
Be there tomorrow?

****

Adriane Saylor

THE GHOSTS IN MY LIVING ROOM

I resurrected Edith Piaf under
the lamp by the window
She came to sing of Paris and to
get me out of the Thursday blues.
With her she brought all the poets
hung in the conspiracy to rid the world
of passion.
It was timely, her coming, just as
Mae West and Marilyn Monroe departed
for the ether of Friday;
James Dean had paid his respects on Sunday,
his lounging form hanging around just long
enough to get my passion all stirred up;
Enough to make you want to do your monkeyshines
for me.
They all had a party right there,
in my living room;
All of them glowing silver-fresh under the
hint of moon-light they had brought with them
for a little atmosphere.
I'm afraid I wasn't very good company,
I cried, you see, when I realized they had not
brought the lady who sang the blues,
just her imitation who tried all night to convince me
that she was myself . . .

****

David Moore

RISE AND FALL

When the vultures gather
Over this haunted land
The man in black will tell you
That it's time to take a stand

Above the stormy mountains
And below the fiery sea
Where the blood will gush in fountains
And the demons dance with glee.
Here's to final battle
Won't you come with me?
Bind your strength to mine
So our souls can soon be free

Go ahead now
Vomit forth your brimstone
Oh Great Dweller in Darkness
We no longer care to heed your gaging call
Go on with your show
Blind us with your pyrotechnic delights
Dazzle us with wonders beyond comprehension
And if at last you do succeed
We'll stand firm against you anyway
So don't call us
We'll call you . . .
Collect

Now the war is over
But you'll give your hate to me
And I'll be forced to sail a wreck
Far across the sea
Maybe there I'll find an island
Where I can drink my tea

****

Judy Belfield

DEATHGAMES

I ask the axeman
to lower his hideous blade
and cut out my soul with skillful precision.
"Kill me now,"
I beg,
knowing he will not oblige.
Like the wicked queen,
I tell the hunter
to bring back Snow White's heart --
only the heart is mine.
He will slay a deer instead
and return with the animal's core,
but I will not be fooled,
for I shall know,
even as I see it limp and lifeless in his hand,
it is identical
to the one beating a requiem in my chest.
Axeman, hunter --
one and the same --
continually cheating me of death
which has already visited . . .
but I cannot sleep quietly
in the bedchamber of oblivion.

****

Judy Belfield

ALL I WANT RIGHT NOW

All I want right now
is to slip into a kangaroo's pouch,
hidden from eyes I cannot bear to remember.
I want cushions for my heart to bounce upon gaily,
and plugs for my ears
to shut out the songs that echo in my spine.
I want calico curtains in the country
of another world in another time,
where jade fingernails
draw gasps of awe
instead of blood.
I want sundimpled cheeks of transparent gauze
and frozen smiles on sticks --
two for a quarter from the ice-cream man --
and razzmatazz monkeys
tapping out tin tunes
in a fallout shelter
safely distant from the grand succession
progression
of sensation.
Give me two icebergs and a Titanic, please,
hold the mayo,
and let me skip rope with a rock in my pocket
and a one-way zipper on my brain.

This poem's a ruse;
a puzzle unimpuzzleable,
impeccably unimpeachable --
except for the gaps
intentionally planned to stymie the psychiatric professors
who promise words will soothe the savage beast
when there are no words
and reality is a subjective zebra --
but I digress . . .
Shall I tell you what I want
or do I want too much?

****

Simon

SWIMMING, GLIDING, GRAY (MATTER?)

Cooling water minnow eat with sparkle on my head.
Kicking waves splash-flaps, whitely flecking translucence.
Octomove, Mantaspray, crusty legging, flipper twitch.
Oh, my! A savage consumer ripping a tear, out now,
bye-bye.
Many minnow eat and insides crabby envelopes.
Yuk! A plant spit, badly bitter.
(Buzzing bubbles)
Touch, new; swimmer pal with reflect patterns checking all.
A stone thin smile, gliding swift amongst a sticky mesh.
Get from; no, refreshment is not far.
Hugg! not pals, no . . . (sound of sifting water gurgling
skyward).

THE END (No brain)!

****

Geri Harder

GIVE ME OLD CLOTHES ANYDAY

Give me old clothes anyday
Over new,
Familiar, warm comfort I can slip
Into.
(Like you)

And slip out of again.
Give me braless and barefeets
And old Chevy backseats,
And your body to wrap around.
I'll take this simple pleasure, thank-you,
Late at night with the windows rolled down.

I won't talk of love,
This won't last that long.
You don't need to know how I'll
Miss you when you're gone.
"You gotta go, I know," I say,
Though it hurts
To lie.
Why can't you stay?

No! It's bad
To be sad
After the good times
We had . . .
And the pleasure made up for the pain.
Although the line was sometimes fine
Between the two . . .

There have been others since you.
They touch me but don't really know how,
And they don't know what to say.
I'm startin' to get this low-down feeling
That it's never gonna be the same.

****

Judy Belfield

LOSING FRIENDS

I've heard it said
that new friends
can fill the gaps
created by those who must leave:
It's a lie!
People simply cannot be replaced;
individuals are always unique.
And so,
while I'm enriched
by the specialness of a particular person,
I am diminished by each departure --
and these separations,
instead of becoming easier to tolerate,
as I grow older
become more agonizing.

****

Jan Allen

WEED

Dandelion stalk
Stands erect, a phallus spent
But still defiant.

****

Judy Belfield

CHANGES AHEAD

I see them on the road
with their thumbs out,
beggin a ride --
and I think I've lost my fear of hitchhikers.
Need a travelin companion
with new blue hair
and calloused feet to match my own,
so we can ride together
to times unknown --
'fore and aft.
Pull the latch
and batten down the hatch;
I'm forsakin this '66 Dodge
for a hodgepodge I don't understand,
and takin a leap to another side
where there may be no ground
but I don't care
cause I'm tired of the
same old sameness
sayin the same old things --
while there are moonbeams to climb
and stars to explore.
Take away the peanut butter
that sticks me to this chair
and give me grass shampoo --
I know it's out there somewhere
waiting to be poured on thirsty pores
underneath a bleached-out shock of hair.
Can't stay no more
with the purple whore of boredom
in an overstuffed loveseat --
where there is no love --
under a roof that sticks to my mouth
like foul-flavored flour-paste
that rots the gums
and holds back tomorrow
on a piece of gray construction paper.
Gotta move, gotta go,
Gotta flow with the changes
even though Dylan got lost on the way,
along with the children
who faded into business like their jeans --
and I am almost transparent myself,
along with the rest of the walkie-talkie automatons.
I gotta break
with the inevitable invisibility
of living death,
and spread out the picnic tablecloths again;
Dance with the ants
on the sap of some tree
and find out if there is a thing called
free.

****

Geri Harder

FOR DOGS AND DREAMERS

Did you know
That Toto
Never saw the green?
Dogs lack color-vision
They say.
(It was Dorothy's dream,
Anyway)
Emerald Cities just shouldn't
Be gray.

****

M. J. Crestman

MONDAY WAS A CHECKER GAME UNFINISHED

Monday was a checker game unfinished.
Tuesday your bear claws held trump
in a grizzly fisted game of draw poker,
And you dared me to get in the game.
But I didn't want to play.
You scoffed and mocked and discarded my
notion I'd even the score,
Let alone get ahead. And I told you outright
with a tightlipped smile that
I did not want to play.
So you laughed at my naivete,
My cowardice, and eventually you picked
apart my personality, and so
I said, "I'm good at games." And if you'd
have looked at my eyes, you'd have known
that you had a worthy opponent. "When I
know it's a game, that is," I said, acknowledging a challenge.
And you wondered, but you had to know.
So I played.
And when the last deal bit into the pit
of my stomach, I took a little bite on yours, and when
the score was tied, another face sat in with a
blinding smile, and charmed my resolve to laughter,
I foolishly folded. Glad the game was over.

But it wasn't, to my surprise.
Another face sat in, dealing from the bottom, hitting hard and fast and mean --
raping my senses -- in a flashing scream of reality.
You're good at games, too. And you're so good
because you have no rules.
Well, let's see if I can shed a few
for the occasion, I thought.
I know what mean is.

Except for a few freedom years, from 1 to 3, from 15 to 19, there's been a mean thing spitting at his image of me. Embarrassing me. Not respecting me. Not EVEN seeing me, the slow-eyed wonder and appreciation of all the gifts here just for the taking, just because you can, and all you have to do is be aware and just look at that, just LOOK at that!! And when the snowmen melt, I still cry cause I love them so. Their smug look of arrogance cause they can stay out longer than I can -- and see all the goings on, the little boys' eyes when they plug in the nose, specially if he's about 2 or so, the little girls' first fear and second love of falling down, then those liquid pools of star shine at making angels in the snow. Watching couples' loving. Liking Ole Mr. Snowman's world, exclaiming at his view any hour of the day! Can you imagine that? Being happy where you're at any hour of the day? Ole Mr. Snowman's got it made of the only GOLD that is. And anybody who can SEE, can see that. But I cry for the children who'll cry when he slips and slides away. For us, he was our first creation. Mine. I made him. And I made him grow to life-size under the workings and standbacks and energies inspired by no one but me. And I think that you probably worked til you were sodden through and through and the cold night's sudden chill made you wet your pants too. And you probably had a few holes in your shoes and a none-too-warm coat, called Ole Eddie's jacket, that you knew couldn't let you stay out too long. I never got to stay out long enough. But, what I could do, was build a snowman like nobody else's. And if anybody poked fun at Grandma's old purple button eyes, and raisin nose and pork 'n beans smile, well, so what. He was mine. And anybody who loved him was my friend. And anybody who didn't, didn't love me. And there were a lot of them. And there were those who didn't care to look, who had no time to look at something I did and was proud of. And there were those who looked and didn't see.I'm not sure which was worse. There are these little naggings that maybe I was wrong. Maybe my snowmen and me weren't acceptable for some reason and I was studying on being hurt and pouting when I encountered mean.

Now whadaya say, how many mean kids snuck around your perimeter? Lurking around, unpredictable. Butch roped poor old JoJo into smashing my snowman. And I saw from the window and wanted to get the snow shovel and go beat Butch on the head. A lot. But I sat there instead. JoJo was retarded. Slow and sweet. Always stood like a little boy waiting for direction. In the last summer, Butch had gotten JoJo to playing a harmonica while riding the bicycle. Butch would holler, "Now play with this hand," and he'd raise a hand, and JoJo'd play with

(continued)

that hand. And I'd beenhidden under the bridge, watching. Butch was about 15. JoJo looked about 18, but he was ageless. Somebody said he was 35. I was 8, going on 9. And I thought, why Butch isn't so mean. He's teaching JoJo to do two things at once. So I watched. Next thing I knew, Butch was getting JoJo to ride faster and faster. Then he pointed out a big clump of dirt and taught JoJo to ride fast as he could and hit that dirt and be airborne maybe 2 or 3 seconds. And JoJo's eyes would light into the purest, joyful light I ever saw. And I was hugging my knees and laughing, cause JoJo was laughing. And I was beginning to like Butch for taking the time. And wondering if maybe Butch didn't care about JoJo, and if he'd take care of him playing over there neath the bridge cause he could get hurt. And Butch was known as a tough guy. The kind nobody messed with. Ugly and mean, wide-chested and black-shirted, he could scoff and people would back up with his words. I wondered about his power. I wondered just how mean is this guy? Then, he got JoJo to going faster and faster and hit the clump and play the harmonica with one hand and I saw the sudden terror as he came down sideways and nearly fell, but recovered with looks of thankfulness and glee, then some pride. And I giggled and laughed at how he straightened his shoulders and pulled himself up real proud. But he told Butch he wouldn't do it again. "Nah," shaking fast little jerks, looking down and up hopefully. "You go -- you," he'd point. "You! Nah! Not me." So Butch patted him and got him to just riding and taking turns playing the harmonica with one hand at a shout and a signal, then the other, and sometimes so fast, JoJo nearly lost control in that mean old white gravel. But boy was he having fun. And the more fun he had, the more those shoulders came back, the more he wiggled up on that seat and straightened himself up -- then that gleam would nearly look like one I knew and now I scooted closer. I wondered if Butch was seeing what he was doing for JoJo. And if he did, was he glad about it. And JoJo was having so much fun, he went back to sailing over the clump. And Butch would holler, "this hand, this hand" and the sudden exchange "WHE-OUGH, WHE-OUGH," sent birds flying under the bridge and JoJo'd hold the harmonica in his mouth, bear down and sail high in the air and landing just right. Now JoJo was headed toward the clump again and Butch turned my way and I saw his eyes. I jumped up and hollered, "JoJo," but he kept going, a long head start to gain power and Butch yelled "this hand," and turned to watch him. "This hand . . .this hand," and he'd point a fist in the air. "WHE-OUGH, WHEE--this hand," and JoJo looked straight and aimed at that dirt, eyes determined, saliva dripping, the harmonica held between his teeth, headed right toward us, watching the arms and the dirt. "Both hands," Butch shouted just at the top of the hill. WHEEEEEEEE and JoJo flipped the bike and his back hit those rocks with the bike crunching him. I ran over and JoJo was mad. Kicked and squirmed his body over those cutting rocks, kicking finally, the bike off him. And he came up all at once, swinging his fists and rubbing his nose and growling. JoJo looked just the way Butch did when he scared everyone away. Butch stood on the hill and looked him over. "Tough break, buddy. You wanna try it again?" JoJo held his fists tighter, his bloody nose running, blood running from the cuts in his face and his eyes were ready. They looked at each other a long time. Butch took a step sidelong down the hill, and JoJo took a step forward, sidestepping, one, two, three. . .two three. Butch spat.

"You're not fair game, fella," he said and marched off. I watched JoJo, looking up shyly at me every once in awhile and then shifting.

"Boy have you got a bloody nose and look at that cut." I pointed to his forehead. He touched it and looked curiously at the blood on his fingers.

"Was he your friend?" I asked. He just kicked the rocks and I laughed. He saw me laughing and kicked them again. Then he ran, kicking rocks sidelong, smoothly. And I was glad he did, too. We were laughing when Butch strode up so hard and fast. I wondered if he'd get me too.

"You're talking to a retard," he said, looking directly at me.

"So what," I said, slowly, looking back, scared.

"You're wastin your time with this dummy," he said.

"Seems to me you just wasted a bunch of your time teachin him somethin nice, then hurtin him with it," I said.

"Oh yeah?" he said, "whadaya gonna do about it?" I looked at him a long time.

"Nothing," I said and eased back. He was bigger than me and that was the bottom line. Everybody knew his folks couldn't do anything with him. He stared a long time and I wanted to run, but for JoJo, I would stay. Maybe, I'm not sure.

Suddenly, he said, "I'll get you," and he rambled off. I'd see him sometimes after that and he'd laugh. I'd seen him once making JoJo put his face in the dirty canal, make a sound like a motorboat til he nearly choked. Then Butch would let him up. JoJo put his head in the water to show he liked doing that, and Butch had laughed. The canal separated us and I hid behind a big tree for awhile and went home sick.

Now, they were smashing my snowman

(continued)

and I couldn't stop them.

"Nothing of consequence," grownups would say. And I never cried then. But now, I do. Cause everything seems bigger than me. And I'm tired.

And now you're turning into a mean thing, too. So what's your story? Do you think Butch was teaching him a lesson by yelling "both hands" on that hill? Do you think lessons have to be so mean? Your figure Butch is saying "Get tough buddy"? Or do you think Butch wasn't sure he himself was so tough and he felt threatened by JoJo's imitation of him and his own tough show? So he had to know. He'd show him fun, then hurt him with it to see how mad he'd get, and what he was going to do about it. Well, that's what I figure. And I figure this: Butch could have made him feel secure and warm, instead of always guessing when Butch would hurt him again. And the chance to be mean. But just how mean was this guy anyway? How many people would think that was great sport and laugh at the dummy? I think that's the kind of mean -- once he found out what he could do to JoJo, and get away with it. With all the horror stories we live in every day, you probably feel I've wasted your time with a bad guy abusing a dummy. Because he could. No other reason. Something to do. But now I'm wondering if that's the kind of mean you are.

I've been thinking about this: humility, arrogance and meanness. We've played all the games now, from "Aw, C'mon Stanley" to JoJo's harmonica. And we've seen the hands fly, the landing and the getting up mean. And we've each had a turn. One trip around is all I'm good for. I don't want to play anymore. I am a worthy opponent, I believe, because other than varying of degrees, I see we have equal shares of humility and arrogance and I believe the world has made us mean. And I think you can get a whole lot meaner. And so can I.

But not to me.

And not to you.

Neither one of us is "fair game."

My sister saw JoJo at the hospital last year. He's in his early 60's, she thought. But she cried and cried over poor old JoJo. And do you know why? Even with his handicap, this man's eyes still shine the purest beautiful light she ever saw. And his openness and friendliness are still all his. And you can bet that he knows mean and indifferent and indignant. But he didn't let the world take away his shine.

****

Geri Harder

FIRST BLOOD

Today I tasted my first blood.
I stabbed you,
Then licked the wound.
But not to heal,
Just to feel
How you must have felt.
Just to taste
What you've been tasting.
Oh, the time that
I've been wasting,
Giving in,
Stepping back,
Never knowing
The pleasure
Of attack.

****

FIRST TIME

My defeat
Was sweet
As lemonade in summertime.

I bled.
You said
I did just fine.

I cried.
You sighed.
Now wasn't that fun?

Sure! In fact,
Looking back,
I think I won.

****

Judy Belfield

1969 OLD TOWN 1981

There are ghosts in the empty courtyards:
shadows of long-haired, barefooted children
begging coins as they walk,
smoking grass in the niches of shops,
painting pictures on the sidewalks.
Still there, the Royal London Wax Museum
and Ripley's Believe It Or Not,
changed only by inflated admission prices.
The Bizarre Bazaar,
once teeming with tourists
seeking out the oddities of a generation,
now admits a trickle of humanity,
which wanders through a maze
of tee-shirts, buttons, patches, earrings,
drug paraphernalia, and sunglasses --
much the same as then.
There, among the wares,
a silver-colored peace symbol hangs on a chain,
clinking faintly in the breeze
against chains suspending hundreds of new symbols.
It lingers like a desperate woman
clinging to a lover who no longer cares.
The ghosts finger it with wistful eye,
afraid to remember with their hands,
lest the touch confirm a poignant death.
The balloon men and the flower peddlers are gone.
Windows which once showed
fringed suede jackets and vests,
leather wristbands,
feathered headbands,
and recycled bell-bottomed Levis til midnight
are now metal-gated at five --
and through the grating
one sees silky print shirts and designer jeans --
or the windows are bare and black,
coated with the dust of disuse,
and reflections of bearded smiles and painted faces
appear and disappear
as quickly as flashbacks of dreams.
Music permeates the air yet,
but it is not Jimi Hendrix or Canned Heat:
the purplehazed psychedelic acid
has seeped into stone walls,
where it can only be tapped
by the ghosts who hear it whispering in their blood.
Old Town is cancerous;
parts of its once-vibrant body have already died --
but the ghosts continue to walk its streets,
floating gloomily through a wordless memory.

****

Adriane Saylor

THE LAST RIDE

Ribbons of purple were just beginning to slit the cerulean sky when the 7:20 bus pulled up alonside of the bus stop. It was one of the newer models, the ones that boasted of being whisper quiet. Around it sped drivers cursing this intrusion in their lane, the last lane of traffic. Most of them were young; kids with long hair and motors that burned gasoline, the fumes escaping behind their cars and scenting the evening with a lust for speed. The old woman frowned a bit, then smiled as one of the boys in a noisy Mustang whistled at her and sped away. She had been young once and had loved the sound of a fast car. She remembered sitting next to Jerry Malovic watching "Rebel Without A Cause." They'd seen it three times in the three years they went together. Jerry had given her a ring, but she'd made him take it back because it was too expensive, her

(continued)

mother had said. Her finger had never forgotten the feel of that ring. They were going to be married right after graduation. They were going to elope. Jerry's parents were Jewish. They were from New York and spoke with an accent. She loved to be in their home. She loved all the things they had collected, and she loved the way Jerry's father always looked soft-eyed and friendly when he talked of "the old neighborhood." He had been a guard in a bank. He would make all of them laugh for hours telling them about all the various people that came and went in the bank. Laughter came easily for him, and for Jerry's mother, who always looked as if she were about to cry over something. They hugged each other a lot, and during their special holidays, they invited her in for cakes and wine. She never drank wine at home. Her parents didn't drink. They were devout Christians and believed drink was the way to hell and damnation. She could still see Jerry smiling with her as he lifted the glass of wine to her over the crowded table in his parents' house. That had been the night he had told them of his plans to marry her. They had not been especially happy, but they had not screamed at her, as her parents did. They had planned to meet and drive to one of his friends' houses and there they would pick up the marriage license, purchased weeks in advance. She smiled to herself. Much lying had gone into that procurement. How they had schemed for love. From the friend's house, they would drive across the state line and be married without parental consent. She had even talked her mother into letting her stay out all night with the lie that she would be spending the night at her girlfriend's house. Such schemes.

They had been on their way when a truck had suddenly appeared as they rounded a curve. Had it not been raining, they might have merely swerved to one side and after calming their nerves with the brandy Jerry had sneaked along, driven on to become man and wife. The only thing she would let herself remember was the crunch of the glass and the feeling of flying through the air, and then the terrible pain that came before unconsciousness. For years she had repeated that scene in her mind. Even after she had married Harley Labo and had four kids by him. After he died, she would sometimes sleep on the couch, afraid to sleep in their big bed alone. It always seemed as if he would come back. Like he'd just come walking back through the door, with that swinging, easy walk of his. She'd see his long, big body leaning over her, his short, rough fingers touching her in his way, his watery blue eyes smiling at her. Other times, she'd see Jerry, his dark hair blowing in the wind, like it did that night, when . . .

"Hey lady, I aint got all day. You getting on or not?" It was the driver of the bus. He stared down at her with impatience. He was young, but the hair that escaped the ponytail he had his hair in had strands of gray in it. So did the mustache that twitched above the thin mouth. She lifted the bag of groceries, the handles of the shopping bag cutting into her fingers. Rolling his eyes heavenward, the driver heaved the bag next to a seat near his and then took her money. He looked at it, then at her, a question crossing his face. She refused the transfer he offered her and sat down next to her bag. It was dark now. A sudden blackness had melted over the violet, and a thin moon danced in front of her in the window of the bus as they rode along. Her feet hurt in her shoes. So did her hands and her back. The pain of age, the pain of being alone with no one waiting for her at home but two cats. She had moved into an apartment about two years ago. The house had simply been more than she could manage. Also, her daughter and son had wanted to put her into an old people's home. Retirement Village, they had called it, telling her how wonderful it would be. She grunted to herself. How wonderful could making potholders all day and sleeping in a room with the smell of disinfectant and death around her be. She wanted to die with dignity. To be left alone to remember Harley and Jerry and her friends who had gone before her. She didn't want some nurse telling her what time to get up and reading to her. She wanted to drink her tea, and eat her cinnamon biscuits and watch the news in her own place. She wanted a place where Jerry's ghost and Harley's ghost would feel at home. So, she had rented the apartment above the bakery. Every morning she would go down and buy fresh danish to have with her tea. Sometimes she would talk with Mr. Neegan about his children or his dead wife, Sheila. He would save some butter cookies for her each week and sometimes they would go to the zoo on Sundays.

Harley would have liked him, she thought as they rode through the night. The bus driver was checking the day's transfers now. She watched the tickets in his hands, thinking of Harley. His hands could make her sing the sweetest music she had told him once. That had been before the children, at the beginning of their marriage. She felt tired tonight, more tired than usual. Maybe it was the change of the weather. It had been unseasonably cold for the last couple of weeks, then today, it had suddenly warmed up. She could be catching the flu, she thought ruefully. It was bad to be sick when you lived alone. Sometimes her sons and daughter went weeks without coming by to see her.

(continued)

The Last Ride, continued

She sighed heavily. Sometimes she wished it were over. Life was too hard without someone to look after her. Harley had often said she'd be helpless without him. It had been a joke then, but now it was true. She managed badly. The bus driver had finished counting the transfers and was about to drive on. He was waiting for the light to change, when suddenly, he sped through the yellow light. In a moment, there was a horrible crashing, and the sound of someone screaming. Then, there was nothing. She felt hands lifting her, then softness. Where was that singing coming from? It sounded like Harley. No, it was Jerry. He was singing to her from somewhere far away.

"Sweet little Susie, that's my little Susie . . . " He sang on and on. His voice was getting nearer, and now, yes now, she could see him. His hair was being whipped about his face by the wind, and his dark eyes were smiling at her. "Jerry, Jerry,Jerry!" she said, seeing herself run into his arms. He scooped her up and kissed her. A long, sloppy kiss that seemed to last forever. Then he was spinning her around and around and around. She was dizzy, seeing everything rush by her. Her children, Harley, Jerry's parents, Mr. Neegan. She didn't care about any of it, she just wanted to be with Jerry forever.

"Mrs. Labo, Mrs. Labo, it's a girl." someone was saying. A girl, Jerry, she told him as he swung her; and I had three sons too. "Mrs. Labo . . .I think we've lost her . . ." someone said. That was far away, and she wanted to go away with Jerry. He was lifting her now. Her shoes were falling off, and one stockinged foot was brushing the ground as he lifted her higher and higher. Then there was only light and then, there was nothing at all.

****

J. D. Guse

POEM TO PAT

Pictures at my Exhibition.
Faces of lonely souls
strewn across my inner memory.
All have got my features
and each one tells a story;
by the gaze of my eyes,
by the snarl in my lip,
by the way I use half a smile
to get things my way.

There's the
Child
(Innocent -- "I didn't know any better" look)
and the
Deviant
(Fiendish -- "I got away with it" look)
and of course the
Mature Personality
(Macho -- "Yea baby, I'm 25" look)

So you see,
my life is filled with more
than the casual friend
or the acquaintance/romance relationship.
I pride myself
on what I have
instead of things I don't have.
Because the things I don't have
are the things I never will have;
You
Love
and me.
Happy Birthday Pat

****

Geri Harder

DEFENSE AGAINST A NOSY NEIGHBOR

"What are you doing?" she asked casually.
"I'm writing a poem.
Please leave me alone."
"No! I mean with your Life," she whined at me.
"I'm not in the mood. Go, please.
This is no time
To define
The Grand Design!"
I get rather impatient with her, you see.

"It IS the time; you're getting older."
I watched her not answering,
as her voice grew louder
And her eyes got colder.
Her lips swelled as her hair turned red,
Like scarlet spaghetti and stood out from her head
At odd angles
In terrible tangles.
Her skin faded to white and her nails grew long
And pointed at me.
They clicked as she clawed
Rhythmically.
Wheezing breath came in drawn out gasps
As she filled herself up
Like a giant water balloon
Rippling like Jello
Into every corner of the room.

I wasn't afraid, she was making me ill.
I wanted that gruesome grin
Off of her face,
Barging in here,
Invading my space,
As if she had all the answers to questions
Unasked by me.
Unwanted, unqualified,
Advice for free.

I tried to mentally block her out.
Even tried those chants.
But they didn't work
So I had to act fast
Before she swallowed me up
Or choked me to death.

I don't always have the power of pen,
But thanks to Bic, I had it then.
I poked, she popped.
No joke, she stopped.
She made a strange winding-down sound
As she slipped in slow motion onto the ground.

Next thing I knew she was back in her chair.
Just as before, sitting there.
But no longer smug.
And leaving no puddle or stain
On the living room rug.

I got up, stretched and yawned.
After which,
I said to the bitch,

"I've finished my poem
So I'll leave you alone."

****

Sharon Odehnal

PATRICIA

Patricia, my dear, so close to my heart
Your voice makes the angels sing.
I listen, my luv, for a song to start
And my soul within takes wing.

The lovely music of only your name
Could calm a throbbing sea.
And all is alive since you came
To give yourself to me.

Patricia, my sky, through which I soar
On the wings of purest gold,
I open myself and in do you pour
More love than I can hold.

The lingering scent of your perfumed smile
Comes to me from a dream.
And I, in darkness must search awhile
To find your vaporous stream.

Paricia, my earth, me Eden in soul
My paradise is in you.
Alone I'm half, with you I'm whole
And only you are true.

The rivers of thoughts inside your mind
Quench this thirsting flower,
And I bloom in an ecstasy of a kind
Not known by minutes or hours.

Patricia, my love, you are never away
For you live within my heart.
Patricia, my love, you must always stay
For you're the linking part.

****

Jan Allen

WORDEATER -- CHILD'S VIEW

Raisin Bran milk dripping down her chin
Annie says, "What is a Lau anyway?"

A mythical beast said to live in Africa
I reply.

Rolling eyes and puckered mouth respond
"I'm never going to Africa then."

"What is this," the other child asks.
A magazine put out by JuCo students
I reply in haste I am reading.

More like KOOKO students she mutters
and returns to her poems of glee.

****

DO YOU?

Do you follow your conscience?
Does your heart lead the way?
Do you hear with your ears
What it is that they say?

Do you shiver at daylight?
Do you run from the stream?
Does your own reflection
Cause you to scream?

Are your teeth clenched in anger?
Do your fists want to fight?
Can you open your hands
And reach for what's right?

Do you hide in the hollow?
Do you search in the maze?
Is you life really cluttered
With dark, wasted days?

Do you hear what I'm saying?
Does it cause you to fight?
If you know where you're going,
Then you'll get there alright.

****

J. D. Guse

IF THE DOG

If the dog is man's best friend,
then why is Pluto so far away?

(home made astronomy joke)

****

Simon

RUDE INTERVENTION

It's remarkable, this term
  with every onlooker pointing,
Giggling with pain, enforcing it,
  and reminding all of their torment.

Fingerprints are for the fingers,
  Not for contaminating consciousness,
Or for marring the 'inferior' life
  (because it has no soul)
Or for rearranging the furniture,
  But they do these things.
  (graceless aren't they?)

****

Simon

I WANT TO BE A MONK

I want to be a monk
I want to be a monk
I want to be a monk

cookin' bread
shavin' my head
eatin' rice
Gee! That's nice

breakin' bricks
playin' with sticks
lightin' candles
wearin' sandals

****

Judy Belfield

I USED TO BE CRAZY

I used to be crazy;
I'd spend whole days
like they were milk money in my pocket
when I was in the second grade:
I'd be walking along on my way to school
and decide to do cartwheels,
forgetting about how thirsty I'd be at lunchtime --
and just like that,
my money would be gone.
And just like that,
I'd lose days.
When I was crazy
I heard voices.
They told me to do things I didn't want to
and I'd have to argue with them,
so I'd sit in corners of the house for hours,
staring at the walls,
waging battle with them --
and somebody would walk by
and ask "whatsamatter,"
but I couldn't hear
because I was too busy inside my head.
I used to sleep til 2 p.m.,
cry a lot,
wander around,
and think about colors capturing me.
Now I lose parts of days,
I ignore the voices,
I only sleep til noon.
When I wander around, I say I'm doing something
and I pretend colors are flat.
I used to be crazy
but I'm not anymore --
I have a paper to prove it.

****

David Moore

AN UNEXPECTED AFTERLIFE

From a place that is not in our universe, two incomprehensible beings observe earth. They are not animal or plant and perhaps are not even alive in the true sense. But though their structures, minds and motives can not be understood, their function is clear. They are the cosmic judges who deliberate outside of space and time in a place devoid of light and natural laws of nature. What do they judge? The answer is simple. They pick between those who will live and those who will die among the multitudes of humanity.

"We must pick again," said the First.

"Why?" asked the Second.

"Because we have to," was the reply. "Don't say anymore, you know as well as I that we must."

"Very well," the Second answered. He had done this for endless ages and he was bored. "Go ahead and begin."

The First paused as if surprised at his comrade's devil-may-care attitude about something so important as life and death. He was silent for quite awhile.

(continued)

"I shall let you pick," said the Second, breaking the silence.

"You know it must be made by both of us," the First responded.

Together they sent their minds to earth. So powerful were these minds that the job was done quickly and easily. They probed every corner and cranny of mankind to find the right choice at the right time. It was done almost instantly, but every single living person on earth was considered.

"These are my choices," stated the First. "That old man with the heart condition, the lady with cancer, the man who was shot, the suicide, the . . . . ."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped the Second. "Take the third one. What does it matter anyway? Be done with it! Kill him."

"It's your turn, you know," replied the First.

The Second made a sound much like that of an angry animal, then he concentrated for a moment and the task was finished. He relaxed, happy that it was over for the moment.

"We must pick again," said the First and it began again.

Life had often been a pain, he knew that for a fact. It had been dull, it had been terrifying, but sometimes it had been fun. He certainly had not wanted to die so young, not if it meant ending up in a place like this.

He drifted in a cool and dark place of weightlessness. There was not the slightest ray of light. He could feel nothing, save for a strange tingle along his spinal nerve cord. He knew he was dead, no doubt about that. But what was his physical condition? Just a mind floating in limbo? A bodyless brain? He gave up. It was useless to speculate. He became aware of two other minds near him. But unlike him, they could communicate. He tried to scream and get their attention, but seemed to have no mouth to do it with. The two beings paid no heed as he continued by. But then, just as he could barely detect them any longer, a voice rang out to him in the nothingness.

"We must pick again," said the first voice.

The second being seemed not to hear, but instead called out. "I'm truly sorry human! I pity you!" That was the last thing he remembered for quite awhile.

When awareness returned, he again had his body and light to see by. He found himself seated in a golden throne before a great table of food. However, this great feast did not hold his attention for very long.

Across the table were three weird creatures. One was human, but that hardly affected his strangeness. He wore a black mask over his face with two bright, intelligent looking eyes staring out at him from the eye-holes. He wore a top hat and a black cape with a silver lining. He was sitting on an iron throne. At his left, sitting like a faithful dog, was an animal that could only be described as a green-scaled dragon. It had one eye and two golden horns atop its head. On the masked man's right, stood still another weird being. It was totally black, a blackness that soaked up the light itself. The head was a sphere of black and three crimson eyes observed the dead man unblinkingly. The thing's body was hidden beneath a black cloak.

"Not what you expected of the hereafter, is it?" said the man politely tipping his top hat. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am called Hein."

The dead man stood up, shuddering slightly, and struggled to get control of himself. Then he asked in a calm voice, "Are you Satan?"

"No," answered the other, "I just told you that my name is Hein." He suddenly laughed. It was not an evil laugh, just one of amusement. "I just realized, sorry. You're trying to fit this situation into your religion, aren't you?"

The dead man sat back down. Hein's sudden outburst had unnerved him even more. "Yes," he finally admitted in a low whisper.

Hein continued. "Did it ever occur to you that there were many religions on earth at the time of your death? The Christian religions, Islam, Hindu, Buddhism, and even such things as devil worship. Don't forget the religions of the past, those of ancient Greece, Babylonia, Egypt -- all of these and many more had many devout followers of great faith. Surely you did not think that all these many, many beliefs could be correct in their assumptions about here. After all, how can you know anything about a place you have never been to and nobody has returned from?"

Now it is a common fact that people do not like to be told that their beliefs are false, and some of them will get very hostile toward you if you say such things. But the dead man controlled himself and countered Hein's point.

"I knew that, but I have often thought that each religion contains part of the truth, and that if you can pick out this fragment of truth from each one and put them all together, you will see things as they really are."

Hein considered that for a moment. "That is a clever idea. Tell me, did you ever try to put the truth together?"

"I wanted to very much. But the dull concerns of day-to-day living started to dominate and I found I had little time."

"That's awful!" exclaimed Hein. "You could have done the world a great

(continued)

service. But that's the way of society, always stifling those things that can help it the most and encouraging that which weakens and eats away at it. Oh, well, too late for you now and even if you had had the time, you might easily have picked out the wrong truths, or put them together wrong, and messed it all up."

"I knew that too, that's probably another reason I never really got started."

"You also died young," stated Hein.

The one-eyed dragon looked up at Hein and growled. The dark thing blinked all three eyes at the same time. A clock struck thirteen -- an unlucky sign -- and Hein glanced around nervously.

The dead man also looked around and for the first time became aware of how strange the room was. The clock that had just struck was behind him, a typical example of a grandfather clock. The walls were painted dark green. The floor had a thick green carpet on it. Objects of art were all over the place -- sculptures on tables, paintings on the walls. The dead man's first impression was that some eccentric millionaire had furnished the place, for all the art works looked like classic masterpieces that any museum would have paid thousands for. But there was something terribly wrong with the room. Something should have been there that wasn't -- something that he had learned to take for granted so much that at first he didn't miss it at all. The room had no doors or windows. There was no escape.

"Don't worry about it," advised Hein. "When the time comes, you'll get out. Just relax, admire the furnishings, have some of this fine food."

The dead man looked over the feast before him and sighed. "I don't even know what any of it is. How about a steak and some wine?"

"Don't like the fancy stuff, do you?" asked Hein. "Very well." He looked at the dragon. "You heard the man, Bargesta."

Bargesta, the dragon, nodded its head and raised its right front foot. Its single eye gleamed with a strange light, and the table top was engulfed by a swirling vortex of green and red lights and colors. When the beast put its foot back on the floor, the vortex vanished and all that remained on the table was the requested food.

"You liked pets when you lived, and you shall have one in your death," stated Hein. "Before you eat, I want you to get up and come here."

The dead man put down his steak knife and did as he was told.

"Put your hand on the table," instructed Hein.

"What are you going to do?"

"You'll see."

Hein suddenly pulled out a large knife from inside his cape and chopped off the dead man's little finger. He then fed the finger to Bargesta.

"Now he is your pet, faithful to you for all eternity. He will serve you and nobody else. He can use his power to get you anything you want, except for two things. It's beyond the scope of his ability to give you your freedom, or bring others here to you," Hein explained all this slowly and carefully, so that there would be no mistake.

"That's nice, but what about my finger?" asked the dead man. He looked down at his hand and gasped in surprise. His finger had grown back.

"One of the advantages of being dead here," stated Hein. "Now then, just one more thing. Look at that painting."

The dead man looked at the painting that Hein was pointing to. Basically, it showed a gigantic monster standing on two huge elephant-like legs. Out of its body sprouted a multitude of arms. Its head was an irregular blob with blazing green eyes shining out. All around it were hundreds of tiny figures. People. The thing's feet and hands were covered with blood and crushing them.

"Good God!" exclaimed the man. "What maniac painted that horror?"

Hein smiled. "I did."

"Oh, sorry. Don't take it personally."

"I don't. Now for a few final words. You shall be confined in this room for several thousand years until the living human race has either exterminated itself or been exterminated. You will be alone, except for Bargesta."

"You're going now?" the dead man asked.

"Yes."

"But you can't! You can't leave me alone for the rest of eternity!" said the dead man.

"But I have to. It's my job," answered Hein.

"No!" shouted the dead man. With one final effort he grabbed Hein's mask and pulled it off. Hein was no longer there. He had simply and completely vanished. The dead man gazed down at the mask he held. "I knew he could get out of here," he moaned.

Suddenly, there was a deep, resounding laugh from behind him. He whirled around to see the dark thing with the three crimson eyes shaking as it made the sound.

"Shut up you damnable hellspawn!" shouted the dead man. He leaped forward, but the thing easily avoided him. He hit the floor hard, and by the time he had gotten back up, the dark thing had also vanished.

For a few moments, he was silent. He looked around his tiny environment and contemplated it carefully. The clock struck fourteen, and the dead man started to cry.

(continued)

"Forever!" he moaned. "Nobody to talk to. So lonely! Please, I need someone to talk to."

"That wish has already been granted," announced Bargesta the Dragon.

****

Jan Allen

HELL

I-55 is the artery into the heart of Hell.
Sodium vapor lamps cast an eerie pall upon the belching factories
As they ooze their foul excrement into the aching air.

I breathe deeply only after I am at home -- a tiny clean and
healthy cell among the cancerous industrial growth.

Once, to savor an especially pleasant morning, I reached my tongue
to touch a dew drop sparkling on an elm leaf.
A surprise of bitter-sulphur-taste filled my mouth and reminded me
that even my home is a part of the vast and sickly whole.

****

Judy Belfield

WHEN THERE WAS GOD
OR
PROLOGUE FOR AN UNWRITTEN NOVEL

When I was eight years old, there was a God. I cried regularly on his great invisible shoulders, begging forgiveness for my sins, because I wanted to go to heaven. I prayed for a disease to rot away my feet, so I could suffer like St. Theresa, but I knew God would never favor me that way because I was so bad: I told lies and I stole, among other things, an Easter-egg coloring kit from the corner grocery store, and I had impure thoughts. But worst of all, I masturbated. I was always going to be better, but somehow it never quite worked out.

There were infrequent times when I was sinless, and then I'd beg God to send an alcoholic driver to dispatch me into Paradise before I transgressed again. It was so hard to be good like Charlene Conway. Charlene was buried in her Communion dress after some alcoholic driver had run her down. She was waked in a white casket, and we all had to visit the funeral home and say the rosary for her soul. I didn't know why, since Sister Ralph Marie had told us Charlene was in heaven. In the classroom before we went, she told us about death and funeral homes. She wanted us to know what to expect. Death was something we already knew about. I began to feel panicky and nauseous. I told Sister Ralph Marie I didn't feel good and did I have to go, but she'd made me ashamed when she said something fuzzy about "respect for a fellow classmate and her family."

I stared at Charlene that day and envied her. She wasn't breathing, but she looked so pretty. I knew she was with Jesus because Sister Ralph said He loved all His good little children. Charlene's mother sat in a corner crying, looking so old and completely empty. Charlene couldn't move any more, and she looked like an oversized doll whose eyes would never open again. I wanted her to get out of that coffin and say it was all a joke, but I knew she wouldn't. There was something very final about the situation, something very final and embarrassing. I felt as though we were all staring at something private, something we had no business witnessing. It was as if Charlene were taking a bath, and we were all peeking through the window -- only she was dead, which was so much worse.

I started thinking about worms crawling over Charlene's Communion dress, about them wriggling through her eye sockets. But Charlene was with Jesus, wasn't she? Her soul was anyway -- it didn't matter that her pretty white dress would turn yellow out there in the cemetery where Charlene's body would spend the rest of eternity alone. It didn't matter that she couldn't ever skip rope again, or get tar all over herself in the summertime when the street crews repaired the potholes.

(continued)

Charlene didn't tell lies or steal Easter-egg coloring kits or have impure thoughts. I was certain she didn't masturbate -- it was unthinkable. She was with Jesus. He loved her because she was good.

I wondered if He could possibly love me after I threw up all over the carpeting at the funeral home. I tried to hold it back, but I just couldn't control myself. I knew Jesus was disgusted, and there wasn't a chance I'd ever make it to heaven.

I was destined for hell from the moment I first discovered there was one. And surely there was a hell, just as there was a Jesus -- and that huge, mysterious man in black who kept trying to kill me in my dreams.

****

David Moore

MAZE OF CONFUSION

A thousand angry penguins
Waved their bloody swords
And then with glee
They wiped them clean
'gainst their tuxedos

W
E
L
L
W
O
N

I looked toward the Mountains of the Moon
During a pleasant day in June
Thinking of what I could have had
It made me rather sad
Twisted sorrow will drive me mad

A
H
Y
S
E

Look to that star
Ignore the rat
Follow her car
Watch out for the cat

B
H
T

If you follow life's stream
Entranced by the gleam
You may spot a neat fish
And my how you'll wish . . .
God how you'll wish
You could swim with that fish
Into a sea
Of colorful glee

O
H
W
E
L
L

Don't take it hard
Just pick a card
You can't win 'em all
Just give us a call
If you want to play ball

****

IT NEVER ENDS

Waivering shadows on the wall
Are the cousins to
Hooded memories marching in procession
These are the silent sentinels
Keeping vigil over what might have been
And still could be . . .
And they are teachers
Bearing great wisdom
They sing silently
Saying softly to me
"The peace you seek
Is the peace you cannot have"
As the gateway to infinity closes
Leaving me alone
Without hope
Without and
Outside

Victory sunshine
Won't shine on me
For the twilight has fallen
And the clouds still remain
Making peace of mind a hollow sham
Projected by hope upon the mists
A concept to be exiled
By the lightning bolts
Of the Great God Reality
Who laughs as He reveals
The Meaning of Life
In a voice of thunder
"Two souls apart
Racing down a highway
In battered automobiles"
He rumbles mockingly
And the gentle breeze
Whispers a reply
"Look for the land
Where none command"

****

Simon

RANDOM GENERATION

Spit! Spat!
Here! There!
Triggering temerity,
Leaving excremental monuments,
in such haste as to suffocate descendents.
I wonder, how fast the brakes will be applied.
An instant? A day? A decade? An eternity?
There is a point at which your waste is too large
for your belt.

****

Judy Belfield

IT IS THE DAY AFTER THE BOMB

It is the day after the bomb.
I sit alone in the rubble
in the so silent silence
where only an occasional fly bizzes by
in the thick, dead stillness.
Dali was right, I think --
the insects will endure.
I hear familiar voices inside my head
and the songs that foretold the end
and the theme from "On the Beach" --
and those imagined sounds
make the silence more silent
as it presses in around me,
sucking out my breath
like tropical summer humidity,
which will see no relief with nightfall
or the rainy season.
I am afraid to move --
the sliding of my leg
through the crumbled mortar and debris
would send an unbearable crash through the air.
But I hear breathing!
coarse and rasping,
echoing to the horizon and back,
and I hold my own
so I may listen more intently --
but it stops
and resumes again when mine does.
This isn't real, I think:
I'm watching myself in an episode of "The Twilight Zone"
or it's a dream I cannot control.
I close my eyes and feel tears,
but will not open them again
until I awake
or die.

****

Sharon Odehnal

THE ROAD'S END

It seems so long ago in that far off place
With a lake dressed in emerald green
That a little girl had her dreams to chase
Amidst a forest so dense and serene.

The majestic Birch tree's towering on high
And trimmed in a spider's lace.
The lovely Owls and Eagles would fly
In a pattern she would trace.

The Bass and Trout leaped high in the air
Sending circular ripples to shore,
As she laughed in delight and would stare
Always hoping to see one more.

The Chipmunks and Groundhogs ate in her hand
And she brought them a lunch everyday.
The Firefl es and Crickets danced on the sand
And she'd smile at them on her way.

The winding roads had such treasures to find
Like nuggets of gold and an arrow head.
And it seemed to her it was silver lined
As she'd follow to where it led.

(continued)

She'd wade in the slime with her naked feet
And squeeze the mud through her toes.
Then she'd chase the frogs that had leaped
Over rocks that were set up in rows.

Chasing her dreams through Butterflies and sand
She followed those roads to their bend,
And now she's wandering again through this land
Older and seeking the road's end.

****

David Moore

AMBERCROM AND BEYOND

I just could not believe that it existed. How could such a thing exist in real life? Tis naught but madness. Oh. Pardon me.

-Ozfiz de Psyche

So so so
Off we go
Running down halls
Rushing cross streets
Taking big falls
Under large stamping feet
I'll play your game
But I'll have to cheat
I'll still lose
But I can't beg or choose

-A. X. R.

Alexander Xavier Raxton opened his eyes, torrents of tears trickling down the sides of his face. Still half asleep, he cautiously shouted at his window shade, through which the golden dawn slowly seeped.

"My God, my God! Our souls are all incomprehensible creatures! They try to reach out to each other with a multitude of tentacles. (Perhaps a metaphor for feelings and emotions?) They seek to intertwine and journey through the Seas of Life together. But I am woeful, for my tentacles are malformed and mutilated!"

A voice, distant and muffled, seeming to come up from some netherworld below, replied to Alexander's aside. "Shut up you goddamn freak or I'll call the goddamn loony bin to come and take you away!"

Those hostile, unpunctuated words sunk into Alex's fogged over brain and brought him into a normal state of wakefulness. He sat up in his orphaned, twinless bed and looked around his scummy one-room apartment as if seeing it for the first time. What a mess it was. What a mess. Alex smiled, He felt at home here for some reason. He had never felt at home anywhere else. He got up casually in order to get dressed. This week's clothes were draped over a chair. One of the chair's legs was shorter than the others. As he made his way to that chair, Alex, whose legs were almost exactly the same length, was careful to avoid the stacks of neatly typed papers on the floor. It was poetry, most of it. Alex styled himself a poet -- a starving artist who worked with words instead of paint. Indeed, the only important item he owned was a junky typewriter.

Once dressed, Alex left his homeland and sauntered down the smudgy hallway to the bathroom. He minded not. Compared to some of the others, he had a luxury flat. It even had a sink! And truly this was his lucky day. A miracle had occurred. There was nobody waiting to use the toilet! He entered and locked the greasy wooden door.

He sat on his throne and surveyed his domain. With the intensity of a scholar going over some ancient text, he scanned the walls for new graffiti. Alex had painfully memorized the location and wording of every bit of ghetto wit. Sure enough, three new lines had randomly been added to the weavings of the obscene tapestry:

DOGFACE BARNES EATS SHIT!!!
SALLY DOES IT FOR FREE
(and, most original of all)
FUCK YOU

Alex sighed, his fellow writers were so unimaginative! Oh well, not everybody can achieve greatness with a penstroke. He took out his felt-tip and left his mark on the world in three lines:

TARS BEN O BARDY MUDDER SORE
THARS BIN A BLUBBY MOIDOR SIRRAH
THERE'S BEEN A BLOODY MURDER SIR

(continued)

They were bold, dark, large letters. Not even a casual glance could miss them. Alex snickered, finished his business, and returned to his apartment. It was time to prepare for his sneak preview of the end of the world.

Put on a dirty red bandana. Attempt to comb the tangled hair. Brush the yellow teeth. Look in the cracked mirror .

Intelligent grey eyes, set in an average looking face, gazed back through John Lennon glasses. A mass of reddish hair and a bushy beard dominated the reflection. How long since he had a haircut?

"My friend, you look like a harmless junkie. But in this neighborhood that aint a bad thing to look like, is it?"

Then, overly stealthful, he left his home once again and crept up the slime-brown stairs to the floor above. He looked around upon arriving. Was the coast clear? Strange idiomatic expression -- what coast? This was the third floor of a slum. He reached a door with peeled paint that looked like all the other doors with peeled paint in the building. Except a peculiar little sign hung on an unusually shiny doorknob. Here is what the sign said:

IF YOU WANT TO HAVE AN HONEST
TO GOD MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE
JUST KNOCK ON THIS DOOR

Alex looked around again. Then he knocked six times loudly. Hopefully not loudly enough to disturb any nonessential personnel. The woman opened the door -- a response programmed into millions of people on the planet earth. Yellow hair, blue eyes, she was slightly taller than Alex. Blonde bombshell, Aryan ideal, a Nordic Valkyrie prepared to collect the souls of the warriors.

"It's about time you got here," she said in a melodious, yet impassive voice. "When someone offers to show you a sample of cosmological entropy -- the process that shall undo the reality of our universe in several billion years -- it isn't wise to be late."

"I'm sorry, Miss Lloyd. I overslept," Alex meekly replied.

"Well, come on," she said, stepping out of her apartment and locking the door.

"After you," Alex responded courteously.

Cut To: Street Scene

Raxton and Lloyd walking along the sidewalk, among the lower classes (You know, the people who don't get their fair share of anything, except kids)

Contrast: The walks of Lloyd and Raxton

Lloyd rapid, confident stride. Holds her head up high. Briefly glances at nearby people to ascertain if they pose a possible threat. Raxton, slower, relaxed pace. Seems uncomfortable walking fast. Likes to look up and down and around. But not at other people. Trails behind Lloyd, who dislikes slowing down in order not to lose him.

"You walk too slow."

"You walk too fast. Besides, I'm in no hurry."

Later:

Raxton: (motivated rudely by curiosity and a need to be amusing) "Tell me, Miss Lloyd, what's a girl like you doing in a place like this?"

Lloyd: (rather annoyed) "You don't seem very impressed by the fact that you're going to get a preview of the end of all that is and ever was." (She cleverly evaded his question.)

Raxton: (Successfully sidetracked) "I've visualized the end of the universe thousands of times in hundreds of different ways. I doubt if what you're going to show me can transcend the powers of my warped imagination."

Lloyd: (Sighing softly, somewhat impatient) "But this will be real."

And still later:

Raxton: (Motivated by a desire felt by many males -- a need to somehow impress Miss Lloyd) "I'm actually rich. I only live in that one-room pig-sty because I'm a sensitive intellectual and an eccentric artist." (Pauses, waits for reply.)

Lloyd: (Impassively neutral) "Fascinating."

Raxton: (Thinking she doubts his word) "Honest! I inherited a comfortable middle class existence. But I dumped it all, sold everything. I got around a hundred thousand dollars jammed in a bank somewhere."

Lloyd: (Pretends to yawn) "Tell me Mr. Raxton, how many of your works have been published?"

Raxton: (Embarrassed, feeling that he's somehow been outwitted) "Well, none actually."

Silence . . .until finally:

The old market district, that's where they ended up. Good God, the streets down there were still brick! Lloyd paused before the entrance to an inconspicuous little shop. The sign above the door read thusly:

AMBERCROM BOOKSTORE

Raxton held the door open for Lloyd. She politely said, "Thank you," as she entered, a purely mechanical response. Look around -- books stacked everywhere. On floors and shelves. Books of all sorts. Hardbacks and paperbacks. Fiction and non-fiction. Fantasy and fact. Science and pornography. And the occult, of course. Alex was truly awed by the vast numbers of books that he had intruded upon. The place was also furnished with an antique cash register, a middle-aged man, and a plain looking

(continued)

young lady. The latter two were comfortably relaxing on old easy chairs. Alex took another glance at the young lady. Plain wasn't the right word for her after all. She was rather attractive. But she certainly looked plain when compared to Miss Lloyd. Thess were the people who held the secret to the annihilation of reality? And the government thought it was so powerful with all those nuclear warheads. Tsk-tsk.

"Allow me to introduce Reverend George Porter and Miss Pegasus. They run this place," spoke Miss Lloyd casually.

"Reverend?" was Raxton's only response.

"Ex-reverend, actually," said Porter in a friendly manner. "I'm-ah-sort of retired."

"Oh," was Raxton's only response. Then, without even being invited to, he found a chair and sat down. Lloyd sat on the floor, even though there were still a couple of empty seats. Nobody said anything for awhile.

Finally, Miss Pegasus spoke up. "Well, we don't have all day. Shall we begin the demonstration?"

"Are you ready for some cosmological entropy?" Rev. Porter asked Raxton.

"Sure," was Raxton's only response.

Suddenly there was what seemed to be an earthquake. The earth rocked on its foundations. The floor tilted ninety degrees, becoming a wall. But there wasn't the slightest sound. That was all Raxton was aware of for the brief moment the event lasted. Everything snapped back to normal. Alex looked around. All was as it had been. Not a single book had fallen from its shelf. His three hosts just observed him as he took deep breaths. The women hadn't even screamed.

"That was just a minor example," commented Miss Pegasus. "And here we go again!"

Suddenly everything was on fire. Books, shelves, cash register, chairs, Porter, Pegasus, Lloyd and Alex. Everything was engulfed by dancing flames. But there was no heat and nothing was consumed. When the flames snuffed themselves out, all was as it had been. Alex checked his hands to make sure there were no third-degree burns.

"Well, what do you think so far?" wondered Porter.

"Freaker," was Raxton's only response.

"His mentality seems to remain stable," Porter told his two associates. "Is is agreed that we should continue?"

"Yes," was Lloyd's vote.

Pegasus considered for a minute before speaking, then said, "Very well, allow me." She then stood up and vanished into thin air.

Raxton was astounded. "What the hell . . .?"

"She just slipped into another level of existence is all," said Lloyd. "You'll be following her in a second or two."

As soon as Raxton realized what she meant, he got up and rushed to the door. Nobody tried to stop him, so he made a hasty exit. Free of that place! It had been too weird, even for him. Then a hand grabbed his shoulder. He spun around and blankly gazed into the eyes of a grizzled old man.

"Got change?" his detainer moaned. "Even a nickle'd help."

"Huh?" Raxton didn't comprehend. "I, I don't--what did you say?"

"I need money real bod," pleaded the old man.

Raxton instinctively stuck a hand in his pocket and found a quarter. He offered it to the bum. As the quarter changed ownership, the reception on Alex's optic nerves began to go bad. The world began to look like a fuzzy picture on an old black and white set. He felt like he was falling, as reality faded away completely. Soon he drifted in a void of total nothing. No light, no darkness, no sound, no silence. All he could do was scream.

...NIGHTOFBRAHMANNIGHTOFBRAHMANNIGHTOFBRAHMANNIGHTOFBRAHMANNIGHTOFBRAHMAN...

Let it be known that Alexander Xavier Raxton floated in that void of nada for a time unknown. His senses, starved for any sensation, pleasant or painful, were finally forced to turn inward. Inward into that which made him what he was -- his creative artist's soul. His mind created vivid visions of the unreal. It even composed and orchestrated music to fit those scenes. And, of course, it put together that which it considered its specialty -- poetry.

(An Example)

Le me tell you a tale of woe
About a dream that died long ago
It's burned deep inside my soul
Forgotten
Forgotten as the spring day that
spawned it

Go down, go down
Past the clear mountain streams
That flow into the rivers of your
mind
Into the sewers of your soul
Under the scum
Beneath the murky waters
Past the nightmare creatures
It's under the mud
The dream is there, with all the
others!

Dreamworld --
Realm of madness
Spiral fires, flaming clouds
Frozen skies, melted stone
Here he rules
Your other self

(continued)

Call him king, he'll let you go
But you are still the master
So a green cat
With blazing red eyes
Takes you home
and Home is...?

-A. X. R.

(We are sorry that it is beyond our ability to show you the terrain Alex visualized, or to present the music arranged to go with it. These technical difficulties will be rectified if we ever transcend to a higher entertainment medium -- at least comic-books!)

-The Management

THE TESTAMENT OF ALEXANDER X. RAXTON
-translated from the original
Random creative thought patterns by a pseudo-Mardukian apprentice

I was free, free, free! Free at last. How long had I been in that bloody void? I'll never know. But I was finally out of it. My perceptions peeked out over the edges of my Self. I was indeed somewhere, so they reoriented themselves to the exterior realm. But I wasn't where I had been. Somehow, I sensed it. I was in a different spiritual realm than that of earth. I was in hell. So here's the story . . .

These blazing red suns had just come up over the horizon. There were three of them. I sighed as soon as I realized that I was in a traffic jam on the highway to hell. And I was at the wheel of a black Corvette, sweating like a pig. Normally, I souldn't mind being at the wheel of a black Corvette, and I can stand sweating like a pig. But all the other autos jammed to a stop along the great freeway, miles ahead and miles behind, were black Corvettes. And damn! I was basting in my own juices and the freaking air-conditioner was turned all the way. When these multiple realizations sank in (that I was in hell, in a traffic jam, in a car just like everybody else's, and sweating like a pig), I uttered a word considered crude in some quarters. I said, "Shit!"

"Why don't you roll down the window, old chap?" suggested a pleasant voice. It spoke with an English accent. I turned to seek out the owner of that voice, memories of Monty Python dredged up. Yes, there he was. I hadn't even known he was there. Huddled in the back seat, he wore a thick coat. You know, the kind Eskimoes are supposed to wear. Hands stuffed in pockets, hood pulled up. I couldn't see the face. It was nothing but a field of darkness. But three glowing red eyes stared back at me. Guess what I asked him? "Who the heck are you?" He had an answer: "I am your personal, private demon. I inspired your tormented creativity, I drove you to reject a normal life. I caused you to alienate yourself from the people you really liked. I am your blessing and your curse." He was a very melodramatic being. After he finished, all I said was, "Oh." We were silent for a few moments, then he said, "Now roll down the bloody window."

Something in that politely pleasant, but unhuman voice told me that I had best obey. I slowly turned the crank, wondering how hot it would be outside. I just knew I was going to be broasted, baked, and fried. But a cool breeze caressed my face instead. I inhaled and relaxed. When I closed my eyes, I could almost smell and imagine a country spring. Needless to say, I shut off the God-forsaken air-conditioner that had so deceived and tortured me. Piece of junk!

Then the traffic started to move. Soon everybody was cruising along at a leisurely rate. I waved and honked at a few people and they waved back, smiling happily. As far as I could tell, I was the only driver chauffering a demon. Everybody elese had his or her car to himself.

"Go *faster*," *commanded my supernatural passenger.* I obediently floored the gas pedal. We started passing

(continued)

the other cars like they were standing still. Then I suddenly lost control. The brand new automobile I had been given went sailing off the road. My demon laughed. A telephone pole rudely placed itself in my path. The car connected with it. For a brief moment, I wondered who in hell used telephones . . .

(Hello Baphomet, this is Satan. How ya doing, buddy?")

...I lost awareness of everything then. Only the demon laughter echoed in my mind, slowly fading.

MORNINGOFSHIVAMORNINGOFSHIVAMORNINGOFSHIVAMORNINGOFSHIVA...

Alexander Xavier Raxton opened his eyes, torrents of tears trickling down the sides of his face. Still half dazed, he moaned solemnly at his window shade, through which the aura of a bloodred sunset seeped. "By the gods, by the gods! My soul is dead. It has beached itself on the shores of Apathy. It struggled for awhile, tentacles thrashing, trying to grab hold of something. But it is now dead, dried, and shriveled."

A voice, distant and muffled, seeming to come down from some mysterious heaven above, replied to Alexander's aside. "Shut up, you goddamn freak, or I'll call the goddamn loony bin to come and haul you away."

I took a test
And I tried my best
But I failed
In Life 101

-A. X. R.

PORTER: (smiling slyly) "He certainly fell for that!"
LLOYD: (giggling girlishly) "Yes, he sure did."
PORTER: "You can come back now Miss Pegasus."

END NARRATIVE

"click"

****

David Moore

AZAMANTA SWIMS GRACEFULLY

The ancient wizard sang a mournful song
As he hiked to Babylon
The birds flew
And the fish swam
Ahriman whispered in his ear
Softly and seductively
But he paid no heed
For he always looked up
Accidently stepping on the tail of
Leviathan
Who snorted brimstone
And spat lava
In his just anger
For his tail was quite sensitive
The wizard ran wildly away
As the beast rose from the sunken spires
of Mu
Chewing despots two by two
Old Tiamat pursued the poor wizard
'cross barren deserts
And slimy swamps
"Be be be with me"
It invited politely
"I will teach many things to you
Passing them under the Table of Wisdom"
Now the wizard sits in a sunny clearing
Happily learning forgotten secrets
He never got to Babylon

RAZZLEFRAZ!!!

****

J. D. Guse

SACRILIGIOUS COMPLIMENT
TO A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

Farrah's face
which is full of grace
hallowed be thy name.
Your kingdom will come,
I will be done
to praise your beauty forever.
Give me this day
to look your way
and forgive the hidden meaning of my
lusting glance
as I forgive myself for the rudeness
I had shown you.
But you have led me into temptation
and delivered me from all evils.
Amen Baby!

****

Adriane Saylor

TOMORROW IS TIME ENOUGH

Today I will listen to no laments
about the state of the economy,
whether or not the bomb will be dropped,
and whether or not the world will give back
what I have given, thoughtlessly;
For today, I will gather the sun and
the wind and all that I can of moments
filled with the memory of your laughter.
Tomorrow is time enough for tears,
tomorrow is time enough for sitting or regretting
actions and moments lost to cowardice.
For today, I will fill my heart with the
meadows of your eyes and dance with
a song of love racing through every nerve
and beating against the very nucleus of my being.
Tomorrow will be time enough to care
about consequences and to sort headlines
and to re-read glances.
Today I will not see ugliness, for today
I will launch your banner, and ring your bell
and challenge each stifled soul to catch this comet
and her blazing trail of happiness.
Tomorrow is time enough for pain,
come, let us feast and love,
today . . . . .

****

Judy Belfield

WHEN I CALLED TODAY

When I called today
there wasn't much
I'd planned to say,
yet we talked for over two hours
and I felt happy.
Some people might think it absurd,
but I asked myself,
"Why am I happy?"
and proceeded to examine the question
by analyzing our conversation
and recreating it
as best as I could remember.
I still couldn't figure out why I was happy
and I told myself,
"This is silly. Jusy enjoy it,"
but I couldn't leave it alone
and I picked at it a while longer.
When I finally realized
that it was you and your voice
that had made me happy,
it was too late --
I wasn't happy any more.
There's a moral here somewhere.

****

J. Aschenbrenner

MOMENTS

What we shared was a moment
nothing more and nothing less.
We knew our path led nowhere
yet we shared our time to the fullest.

You showed me a world
which was glitter and gold
delicate and soft to hold.

You showed me a world
which was hard and cracked
like old leather.
With people who lived only at night
in a facade of happiness.
Love hungry people
trying their best to survive.

When your time comes for cards
and I'm thinking about what we've
been through
I'll know my life was important
when I think of you.

****

Adriane Saylor

DAY RETROGRADE, OR MOON, VOID OF COURSE

Moons, what is this, madness
that tips teacups and sticks my tongue
to such banal phrases?
Stars, what that love should tumble
and aborted be at the root of my soul;
What cause for all this wind that
tosses thought like leaves about in a jumble?

(continued)

Day Retrograde, continued

That I should say things ill,
words should fall like stones, not
feathers, and you should look away.
Bright, brihgt planet in the firmament of
my heart, that I should be adrift thus.
Hasty step that should lead me as it does
away from the warmth of your glow.
Down, down oh bitchy mistress,
your fire put out this day retrograde,
this hour of my fail.
Oh sow, you hateful, sour vixen
drag away your poetic prophesy.
Heresy, this, that sends the lover away
unrequited with bitter words and hurtful glances
instead of sweet and soothed friendship
and aborted chances to fan the coals of love
anew.....

****

Mary Hensley

SUNDAY DRIVE

He at the wheel,
Eyes straight ahead
Controlling their lives
With both hands.

She with the door
Gazing beyond
Wondering, pondering, not sure.

A lifetime of emptiness filled in
Between them
Yards and yards of silence
Upholstering the seats.

If autos could drive
In two different directions
He'd travel on forward
And she would detour.

****

Judy Belfield

BECAUSE YOUR KISSES WERE SO WARM

Because your kisses were so warm,
I thought I knew you --
but they were whispers
that told selected secrets
and kept your mystery intact --
while I blabbered out my essence.

Because you permitted our minds to touch,
I thought I knew you --
but it was oblique contact you carefully controlled
and we met only on tangents you dared to bare --
while I tore off my clothes and frolicked naked.

I think now
that all was not as it should have been --
You *were much wiser* than I.

****

Geri Harder

HOW DID YOU KNOW?

My bedroom eyes
Told you lies.
But how could you tell?
How did you get
So wise?
To see inside
My soul
And know
That what I said I needed
Wasn't even what I wanted.
And that leaving was best
Before the regrets.

Had you been
Around that much?
Had you seen
Enough pain
To know that, from you,
I had gained
All that I should?
And that the best kiss
Would be that
Last, fast one
We shared?
I can see now
The special way
You cared.

****

Geri Harder

FOR DAVE

Daydreams and cigarettes.
Countless hours
I have spent.
All alone
With the stereo
And a telephone
That doesn't ring
Anymore.
Listening to them sing
The songs
That made you take
Your life
A little easier.
Because it was
So hard
To play with
The cards
You were dealt
By a God I don't understand,
Who stole you back
At a time
That was so wrong,
Right in the middle
Of your favorite song.
Babe, I hope there's music
Wherever you are.
And that the sky
Still looks blue.
And that you can hear the songs
I never stop playing
For you.

****

FACING IT AGAIN

Five rum and cokes
And a few easy tokes
Out at Greener Pastures
Enjoying myself
Until watching the dancers
Who got to dance slow
Made me think of you
And another night
When the high wasn't forced
And the dance floor lights
Flickered to the beat
Of Seger and "You'll Accompany Me".
You held me close and rocked me,
Your new baby.
I read promises in your eyes
About the "someday, lady . . ."
That weren't really there
Because they never came true,
But I saw them anyway
And fell in love with you.
It just felt right at the time;
Foresight has never been
A close friend of mine.

****

Judy Belfield

I SIT . . . PEN IN HAND

I sit . . .
pen in hand,
pretending written words
can substitute
for those I'd rather say to you.
And I imagine you're here
standing at my elbow,
reading over my shoulder,
watching every word appear --
anticipating the next phrase,
because you know
the windings of my mind
too well.
And all the while,
you smile <u>that</u> smile --
I see it now before me on the page
tangled in with the words,
blurring my concentration
and my eyes.

I sit . . .
pen in hand,
pretending . . .

****

LET US RUN AWAY

Let us run away
out beyond the stars
to worlds untouched.
Dream with me
of splashing in pools of color
that turn our bodies
from silver to green to scarlet
as we race toward purple horizons
that seem impossible to reach --
but we won't care.

Think of flowers that twinkle
and fragrant suns
and whispering ribbons of air
to tie in our hair.

Hold my hand
and feel the magic
of piano music
escaping from giant seashells in the sky.

Look into my eye
and see it all there waiting --
you don't even need to pack.

****

Geri Harder

THIS TIME

When the shit
(That you don't give)
Hits,
I split.
No, wrong.
I'll already
Be gone,
Down the road
With my load --
So long.
I aint gonna
Hang around.
I'm gonna see it
Comin' down.

****

Geri Harder

A FANTASY

Rub my back.
Don't give no flak.
This is a game
Where you can't say my name
Or make comments about
Any name I cry out.
Just play out my scenes.
You'll get your turn
But now it's for me.

Okay, lights out.
Now lick me here and
Inside my ear.
Put your fingers
Right down there
And take me for a ride
In the rocking chair.

Okay, no more.
Onto the floor.
Led Zep sets the beat
With "Tea for One".
Now give it to me
And keep that pace.
Put your kisses
All over my face
And keep your hands in my hair.

Don't talk to me.
I want to hear you breathe . . .
Now it's over
But you don't have to leave.
Stay and be my pillow
Till I fall asleep.
Next time is your turn.
We'll act out your dreams.

But one rule is always the same,
If I play this game.
Whatever you say,
You can't say my name.

****

J. Aschenbrenner

LOVE ON THE ROCKS

The city is silent now
as it stands behind us
while we stop and listen to our thoughts.

The water laps repeatedly against the shore
as lights flicker from distant vessels.

Our bodies touch and slide together
turn and fold with passion
hidden in the vapor of fog.
August's steam bath has hidden us well
upon the rocks.

Your skin is moist with earth's dampness
and glistens beneath me.
So much is shared within our minds, beyond our bodies.
This time is ours, moments shared.

****

Simon

"13" AND NOTHING BETTER TO DO

I met her in a bar.
She was drunk, and so was I.

We danced to music.
I asked her, "Do you want to leave?"

She answered me with a "yes."
We got inside my car.

We carried on a little bit.
I drove to an inn.

Then we went in,
And carried on a little bit more.

Suddenly she had her lips <u>there</u>.
I told her to stop.

She ignored me.
So, I choked her until she was dead.

****

Mary Hensley

ACE IS THE PLACE

Abby lay in bed, her hands clenched in fists of frustration. Steven rolled over on his side and resumed his snoring. Contentment showed on his face. His body was relaxed and spent from their lovemaking. Abby felt her nails as they painfully etched small semicircles in her palms. "Lovemaking! God, he couldn't even take off my nightgown," she bitterly cried as she tugged the soft blue cloth down to cover her nakedness.

Cars could be heard down in the street. Life goes on, she thought. Life goes on. Abby's frustration and anger grew as the chimes on the old grandfather clock announced the passing of time. Grabbing her pillow, she slid out of bed so as not to wake Steven. This precaution was unnecessary. He would not awaken the rest of the night. Alcohol was a good sedative. Years ago, in an attempt to placate Abby, after she had asked for a divorce, he had switched from whiskey to beer. The grand gesture had done nothing for their marital problems and less for their love life. Whiskey or beer, the effects were the same. Abby had, at one time, tried drinking to match Steven's moods. All she accomplished was to acquire a ghastly headache and burn a perfectly good dinner while hanging on the toilet heaving what felt like the linings of her stomach.

(continued)

Now she was glad he had sedated himself. The night was hers.

Softly she padded barefoot into Brian's room. Thirteen, long and bony, his golden brown hair stood up at odd angles. He tried so hard to tame the unruly cowlicks. Abby smiled to herself as she recalled the day they had gone to a petting zoo and a six-foot tall llama had leaned over and begun munching Brian's hair. She looked down now and noticed the dirty socks he wore. Brian insisted on wearing his socks to bed even though Abby warned him that wearing socks to bed resulted in nightmares. It was a game they played. Each knew the worst that could happen would be a chronic case of stinky feet. Gently, she leaned down and kissed his ruffled hair.

Down the hallway, Sara slept in a fairy tale world of ruffles and flowers. Her room was bathed in a glow of street lights filtered by evergreens that surrounded the Victorian turret windows. Under piles of patchwork quilts that Abby had made lay her beautiful daughter, nestled among admiring fans. Fred the frog, Annie, and an entourage of dolls whose names changed as often as the pages of a calendar. Only one detail broke the magical spell and that was the fact that her daughter snored. The love of her life, the image of her own childhood, snored. Not a sweet soft murmur, but a full-blown nasal snore. Abby surveyed the room and took in the wide array of objects that expressed her daughter's changing interests. Roller skates and sewing boxes, fairy tale books and KISS posters. Growing up is not a smooth process. Abby paused at the door and wondered if the process ever ended.

Becky's was a small room with lots of windows, making bright and sunny to match the child's disposition. Colorful paper and apple green carpet exemplified Becky. Becky was the light of Abby's world. The youngest of the children, she was the most loving and giving. Too unselfish, Abby thought, as Becky tried to keep everyone happy, a big job for one so small.

When Abby entered Becky's room, she found her little one curled up in a fetal position, thumb firmly rooted in her mouth. Becky was proud that she no longer sucked her thumb, and Abby didn't have the heart to tell her different.

Abby leaned down and brushed wisps of hair from her little one's face, allowing the happiness her children gave her to relax strained muscles, ease tired emotions.

As she eased one foot in front of the other down the darkened stairway, Abby wondered why such a beautiful feeling of love just wasn't enough.

At the bottom of the stairs, she stood for some moments and listened to the sounds of the old house. A branch played rhythmically on a screen, the pendulum gliding back and forth, a breeze causing a shade to rattle. And everyone upstairs slept.

Taking her pillow, she made up a bed on the front room couch. The dog, happy to see her, bounded onto the end of the sofa. She made a mental note to bathe him in the morning. Abby realized sleep was not what she needed.

Getting up, she made her way to the bathroom and pulled out her old jogging suit. It had been years since she ran, long ago given up when she began to channel her marital frustrations into a new job. Also she had found that running had had a strange aphrodisiac effect, leaving her with a sensuous feeling that created an even greater frustration. Tonight she would run and come home with no frustration.

Abby slipped the nightgown over her head, pausing to survey herself in the mirror. Not bad. Three babies had left their marks, but Abby had never felt these baby lines were ugly. In fact, she felt a pride in their presence. No man other than Steven had ever seen her naked and she felt apprehensive now. Steven had held her when she was young, firm, and unmarked. He had seen the change from young girl to womanhood. Would another man be disappointed? Abby took a deep breath, threw the nightgown into the closet and donned her gray sweatsuit and beaten down shoes.

Standing at the door, a whispered "Good-bye" on her lips, she ran her fingers through her uncombed hair and decided it was time.

David had wanted her for a year now. They had met while shopping for plumbing supplies. Abby was fixing a leaky faucet. David was replacing a water heater and no salesperson had been within five hundred feet.

They began comparing their old houses and soon were playing "I bet my roof is worse than yours" games. They simply enjoyed each other. Neither wanted to end the conversation, yet neither knew how to continue. As the purchases were rung up and bagged, on the way to the parking lot, until the moment the car doors were unlocked, they shared carpentry secrets, plumbing hints, anything to prolong the time together. Then it was time to leave. Abby felt devastated. She had known this man less than an hour and she felt as though she had lost a best friend.

She found herself often at the hardware store. She didn't see David again until weeks later when she spotted him, paint-splattered, trying to match colors to various splotches on his arms and sneakers. Abby smiled, withheld a cry of joy, and walked over and said, "hi." David whirled about, a grin crossed his face, and they resumed bantering as if there had been no interruption.

This time, after unloading their purchases in their cars, David and Abby

(continued)

walked to a nearby coffee shop and spent the entire afternoon getting to know each other. Childhoods, secret dreams, favorite ice cream flavors, movies, books, flowers -- anything and everything. They became sister and brother, best friends and lovers all in an afternoon over coffee.

Being married, a friendship was all that either of them expected. Or had they? As Abby walked towards David's house, she wondered if she had not wanted David as a true lover from the moment she had first seen him.

For a year now, they had had secret picnics, hour-long phone conversations. Notes had been left under each other's windshield wipers. And always trips to the hardware store, where they would wander up and down aisles of mysterious gadgetry, entertaining each other with feats of heroic 'how-to-fixits."

Both married to spouses who rejected the idea of do-it-yourself reparirs, they had undertaken these chores of necessity, found them enjoyable, and now basked in the added bonus of sharing their feats with another.

So the weeks and months went by, and through it all, they never physically touched. Oh, a hand brushed against while passing some new wizardry at the hardware store, or a baloney sandwich at the park, but never did they deliberately touch. No hand holding, no walking close, no legs pressed together at picnic tables. They had controlled themselves admirably. Now Abby thought, "for what?" Tonight she would find out if the earth would tremble, if the sky would fall, if God would bellow down and condemn her for all eternity. Tonight she would take a lover.

She and David had agreed to wait a year. She would be secure in her job and a divoree would be swift, as she would be able to support the children. Helen, David's wife, had announced years ago she wanted her own life and when their youngest, was in school, she would leave David, their children and home. A year now wasn't long to wait. They both agreed -- a year.

But tonight, a year seemed just too long to wait.

Abby speeded up her pace. She was now on his street and felt silly, but hummed the old tune from "My Fair Lady" that expressed her feelings.

Not one car had passed her, and his street was as deserted as the rest of the neighborhood at this hour.

David's house was dark, the battered pick-up was parked reassuringly in the drive. Helen's car was tidily tucked away under the car port.

Silently, she crept up the drive, thankful this was not a doggy neighborhood with barking to announce her approach. Standing before his bedroom window she prayed, then stopped, remembering God probably would not like being called on to assure a safe affair! Abby tapped on the window and hoped (hoping being godless and safe) that Helen had fallen asleep in the baby's room, as she did now that she had fulfilled her wifely duty of having children.

Tap, tap, tap. "Please David, wake up," She waited.

Drapes rustled. There was David, peering out through sleepy eyes, that familiar grin of recognition appearing on his face. She smiled back, and the curtain fell as if he had never been there. An owl hooted in a nearby tree, a siren could be heard chasing across town, and then the back door creaked. That was the sound she had waited for. Oh, how long she had waited.

David came hopping out, trying to get to her and tie his shoe at the same time. He forgot the shoe and rushed to engulf her in his arms. No more talking. Now they would touch each other. No longer were words needed to create a barrier. All barriers were gone, and both knew they would talk later. But now talk just wasn't needed. They let go of each other and David now leaned down in earnest to tie his shoes. He too had put on his jogging suit. They held hands. A delicious feeling of closeness surrounded them and they began to walk the nearby streets. David and Abby walked in perfect unison. Stolen sidelong glances confirmed that each was as happy as the other.

Abby slid her hand from David's, and walked backwards, in front of him, teasing him with smiles and fleeting kisses. Feeling an unbelievable freedom, she took off running, glancing back just once to see David protectively behind her. When her lungs would no longer sustain her, she rolled into a ball and came to a stop under a large flowering lilac bush.

David caught up and found Abby sitting, her chin on her knees, arms wrapped around her legs. He slid in next to her, scraping his large frame on the low branches. They sat apart, each drinking in the other's presence. David scooted over closer to Abby, put his arm around her shoulder, and leaned his face against her hair. She looked up and they kissed, not fleeting, teasir kisses, but deep passionate exchanges. Still they did not speak. Slowly they drew apart and began to undress, each helping the other, hands gliding over bodies, discovering enjoying, lingerin Making a bed of their gray sweat suits, Abby lay back and accepted David as a lover. Their night journey had been their foreplay. They took from each other eagerly. Unselfishly they gave. And they came, too soon and yet not soon enough. Both knew it would be the

(continued)

first of many unions.

They remained holding each other, whispering each other's name. They made wild, incredible promises -- wishes for the future. Before long, Abby felt David's manliness. She giggled and decided to stop reading Southern romance novels, in which women always felt their lovers' "manliness." But she couldn't think of a better phrase to explain what was happening. She was feeling David, and, luckier than her Southern counterparts, she wasn't encumbered by tiers of petticoats and pantaloons. She could feel, see and touch David. He was here and she was ready to accept him.

A barge sounded off in the distance. They shared one last kiss, then hurriedly dressed. Just then a hand came through the bushes and shook her. Startled, Abby screamed and turned to find a policeman firmly grasping her shoulder. She looked back for David but he was gone. And the policeman kept shaking her.

Suddenly, she sat up. Steven was standing over the couch ready to shake her again. "Wake up. It's time to get up and fix breakfast." Taking a deep breath, Abby oriented herself to the morning reality. A deep sadness came over her. She had fallen asleep on the couch last night. She hadn't made love to David. Not yet, she smiled. Later that morning, after giving the dog a bath, she went down to the hardware store to see what was new.

The End or Beginning!

****

Jan Allen

A LINEAR PROGRESSION

p. m.

uptight
kids fight
husband right
stars bright
sex tonight!

a. m.

breakfast make
cake bake
break take
lawn rake
orgasm fake

****

J. D. Guse

NEW WORDS TO AN OLD TUNE

A cloudless night
with a star-filled sky
you often make me wonder why
We
haven't shared this time together.
The configurations
of your face
have often told me there's a place
that we
could someday share forever.

You have shown to me
the side of you
that longs to be free.
But darlin' can't you see
that you and I together
were always meant to be.

You made me feel
a whole new way
when I saw you on that summer's day.
You see
you've made my whole life better.

In a thousand dreams
from night to night
the way you look just seems so right,
For you
my love will last forever.

****

Douglas W. Billett

A SONG

A song
comes on the radio.
A feeling engulfs me;
takes me over.
Sends me drifting
in a world
where fantasy
tries so hard
to become reality.
I glide mellifluously
in a daydream
where all is perfect.
My body tingles
in a natural high,
and I am addicted.
Then suddenly,
the song is over,
my spirit drops --
leaving me empty
until reality
thrusts itself
upon me.
And, once again
I am forced
to face
this imperfection
called life.

Dwbgebntifshrspa
320-64-7809

****

David Moore

THE SHADOW OF THE LAU

There it sat in all its glory
But it was ignored.
Not that it strove for attention
Or sought after anonymity --
It merely was where it was
Unknowingly waiting for discovery.
Then the universal triad
Of reason, imagination, and emotion
Beheld it and knew obsession.
Without realizing or caring,
It cast a shadow that toppled tradition.
They were helpless for many days
For the storms came
Cutting them off from that which they desired.
For they felt alone and empty otherwise,
Straight courage lacking,
They began to stalk,
Meeting it on its daily path.
Finding moments of spiritual fulfillment,
They maneuvered beside it
Enjoying the minutes provided,
Pleasantly chatting
About nothing in particular at all.
Then came bitter frustration.
It failed to show at the proper times and places,
It sped up and slowed down,
Going on long journeys to exotic places.
Was it aware of the hunters?
Was it being devious too?
They didn't know.
But when they thought they were ahead
They saw they were really behind.

****

Douglas W. Billett

My HANDS

Lay back, relax.
There's no need for words,
just let me touch you.
Drop your guard, surrender
so my hands
can feel what's in your heart.
My hands
are an extension
of my mind.
They tell me the story
of how you feel inside,
deep inside.
I sense what you need --
what you really want.
My hands
are as gentle as a feather in a breeze.
They unlock
the secrets within,
secrets you could never say.
So close your eyes
and think no more.
Just drift on the sea of feeling,
because I hold the key
which sets your passion free.

Dwbgebnitfshrspa
320-64-7809

****

Diane Francis

TO THE BLOODGUILTY ONE

As I look upon this superficial wound
instilled by YOU and YOUR demands,
I see the blood oozing in small amounts
onto my paper --
expressing only limited traces
of my inner self.
It reeks of a purulent matter.
As YOU push the knife of criticism
deeper into my flesh,
I feel the pain of YOUR condemnation,
which makes me cry
with tears of anguish.
But those agonizing tears
are slowly washing away
the barrier of inhibition
from my eyes.
The blandness of my thoughts
has been drowned in a sea
of salty excretion.
Now, I can see into YOUR mind,
and feel the madness
and insanity
that lurks in the expression
of YOUR words.
But why am I condoning
this attack upon my
intellectual feelings?
Why do I also hold a knife
in my hands
and begin to pierce
my own wall of protection
and security?

(continued)

To The Bloodguilty One, continued

Searching for an artery,
I feel the desire to see
the gushing spurts of blood
shoot forth
and splash upon YOUR face
and into YOUR mouth,
so YOU can taste
the warm fluid
that YOU say must
control my writing.
And I'll laugh
with cynicism
until YOU drown
and lie
in the pool of red fluid
that YOU,
YOURSELF,
withdrew from my body.

****

Adriane Saylor

LOVE MONEY

You are a coin in my pocket,
wishing to be spent.
You lie there, not quite next to my
thigh, a hot penny, burning my flesh.
You want to pay me for praise,
but I will not let you free;
I want to collect you, to hold onto
your smooth surface, to fondle each side
of you forever.
You frighten me by almost slipping away,
so I push you deeper, out of
sight.
I'm almost afraid to look at you,
afraid you might be tarnishing, there
where I have made your home.
Like a dollar, you do not attract others,
but linger, always on the verge of leaving me.
I will not have it, I yell to your image.
But with each hour you spend next to my hands,
some of you fades away;
You are losing your green finish
and your edges are fraying away to nothing,
leaving me feeling empty, hungry and poor.

****

Judy Belfield

LIKE A THIEF

Like a thief,
it came creeping,
peeping through my windows,
peering in at night,
sneaking round the bushes,
watching me
watching me
wanting to come in
begging to come in.
After awhile, I let it --
and it filled the air
with smiling lilacs.
A rose sang an overture
and kissed me in the silence
of an overcrowded void.
Outside a bridal shop
and down a bumpy, lonely road
it followed,
swirling its stain
about my feet,
inching toward my soul,
until one day --
at last --
it touched me,
caressed me like a babe,
fondled my new fingers and toes
and bounced me on its knee.
I've been had again.

****

Simon

THE HUMAN FETUS IS LIKE A PARASITIC TAPEWORM THAT NEEDS TO BE PUNISHED

It gropes to visceral impulses, to scorch an evil fume
reeking of a rodent bite, by a clever swollen plume.
The decomposed projectiles, pulsating without light,
wretch constantly, impacting marrow, throbbing with delight.
Sliding, shimmering vomit impaled upon his eyes
diminished to reconcile, a sentence passed by lies.
Fragments of a carcass spurt, approaching from behind
eject to negate orbs of silence, heaving in his mind.
Tunnels of reverberation choke my only child,
expectorating itching veins of slime later to be trialed.
The viscosity of repression has thickened on the wall.
Relinquish grabbing, jabbing crowds recovered from the fall.
The medium that is enslaved is pleasant to the taste,
writhing points of unconcern, mangled by their haste.
The prey, a sight fixed upon, is an infant's rind.
A blast explosive, ripping, scrapping, and the infant is now fined.

****

Simon

DON'T FACE THE NATION (NON-SENSE)

Blind to corruption, all the mice had coats
It's best to turn your head away from burning yellow boats.
Wash your hands three times a day, flush down the water,
You don't need to look this way while we kill your daughter.
Early expiration the blue man plays the game,
The circus lions ate up the man they tried to tame.
They opposed, but didn't see, when the rivers ceased their flow,
I want to plant a garden, but my neighbor has my hoe.
I talk to you, you talk to me, they always bend our phrase
one hundred and eighty degrees out of phase.
Be sure to tell the story and switch around the facts,
or we'll turn the volume up to "10" on your income tax.

****

Judy Belfield

EVEN AS THE SUN SHINES

Even as the sun shines its clean, clear, yellow light
on the bare, round arms of children
dancing their games on the playgrounds of the earth,
an ugliness burbles that cannot be silenced.
And we, seeing flowers bloom in our gardens,
hearing the giggles of toddlers chasing moths,
and smelling sweet grass, new-mown,
try to pretend the ugliness doesn't exist.
While we laugh with friends and drink our iced tea,
it creeps about us like a silent plague,
yet not so kind as pestilence --
it tears at flesh,
ripping skin and bone
and sends a shriek of blood into the air
but we do not hear --
our tidy homes and handy gadgets are too important.
From time to time,
the ugliness becomes so horrific,
we are made to listen,
and then we chat with one another over coffee
and the horror continues while we speak words that deny its presence,
except "somewhere else."
Our air-conditioners hum;
we are mesmerized by the sugar of an electronic eye
which peers at us from morning til night
and we are technological diabetics
no better than the machines we created,
because we do not feel
until we are told we should.
A president or a pope is shot
and murmurs of outrage are heard.
Sadness and disgust rise up in volume
as people cluck their tongues or shed their tears en-masse.
But at the very moment
the tsk-tsks escape their windpipes,
another windpipe stops
in the darkness of a city or a country road;
in the sunlit penthouses or Harlems of the earth.
And nothing can extinguish the ugliness
which slashes at our brothers' bellies,
for it feeds on itself
and grows more awesome every day . . .
while the children play
and flowers bloom.

****

Simon

SIGHTING A NAVY AD

Violence is a sin against ourselves,
And should die upon our hidden shelves.

Life must live in free persistence
with memory of initial existence.

Reptilian aggression slowly erased,
with silent redundant technological haste.

Considered dissonance is euphonic,
human relationships platonic.

If backward magnitudes continue,
then go to volume one, first issue.

A viewpoint is sacred truth,
Destruction: a quality of non-required youth.

With egos falsely superior,
used to destroy things inferior,
the alien folly glitch a missle,
that meet casualties that click, chirp, whistle.

Imperceptibly, unintelligents tread
and excrete residual unresponding dead.

"Why?" with a sigh?
20 hertz, the reply.

****

J. Aschenbrenner

PAIN SO DEEP

It's narrow there
where the boy lies
funneled into earth's flanks
pressed deeper into its depths.

The boy cries at first
but soon his cries fade
into a cold, sterile silence
time is kept now
only by his heart beat.

He is no longer aware
his mind is a blur of pain
he is no longer
a part of our lives
taken so violently
so abruptly.

The child once played here
in this field above
chasing swallowtails and bluejays.

But now he lies below
funneled between earth's flanks.

****

Adriane Saylor

SOME STUFF ON A THURSDAY

Botticelli never painted Venus
on that shell;
She emerged, splendidly perfect from
the heart of love and rested there,
unaware that her home in the sea had vanished
and Botticelli in his human condition had forever
imprisoned her on that imperfect canvas.
She was forever to emerge,
from the minds of men
always
a little less perfect than she had been
the morning Botticelli captured her.
A nude prototype for female;
A stereotype held before every girl child
and mirrored in the halls of dream
or whispered into the ears of every artist since
then.
But, Morgan Le Fay,
woman's other self, the one we seldom see
or hear about, has all these years drifted on the verge
of someone's nightmare.
Vindicated be, witch in us all,
this day I have emerged from the turmoil
of my painted life and said adieu to Venus and her shell,
for Morgan and her spells of candor. . .

****

Marge Peterson

TOAD TEA

There once was a big, brown toad,
Who was as knobby as knobby could be.
He lived in a house by the road,
And never missed afternoon tea.

He ate flies by the dozen,
And thought woolly worms wonderful, too.
He liked to invite his cousin,
And maybe an ant or two.

His cousin always showed up,
The ants, however, did not,
Never sure if they were to sup,
Or be served up crisp and hot.

****

WORDEATER